

**For discussion on  
31 October 2017**

## **LegCo Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene**

### **Policy Address 2017-18 Policy Initiatives of the Food and Health Bureau**

#### **Vision**

The Food and Health Bureau (FHB) formulates related policies under its ambit to build a healthy society. On the food safety and environmental hygiene fronts, we will continue to do our best in ensuring food safety and providing a clean and hygienic environment to promote public health and raise the living standards of our citizens.

#### **New Initiatives**

##### Enhancing the Capacity in Risk Analysis and Food Traceability

2. To enhance its capability in conducting risk-based surveillance and taking contingency measures in food incidents, the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) will improve its information technology systems to enhance its capability in risk analysis and food traceability, and to interface with the “Trade Single Window”. We are seeking approval from the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council for creating a seven-year supernumerary post of Senior Principal Executive Officer in CFS to head a multi-disciplinary team to carry out the above work.

##### Export Control of Powdered Formulae

3. In 2013, the parallel trading activities of powdered formulae led to insufficient supply in the local market to meet the demands of our local parents. Therefore, the Government implemented export control of powdered formulae to safeguard the stable supply of powdered formulae and ensure that local demand is not adversely affected by parallel trading activities. Mindful of the concerns of different stakeholders in the community over the export control of powdered formulae, we will carry out a review on this issue, and explore long-term measures to safeguard the

stability of local supply of powdered formulae.

### Public Markets

4. The Government will build new public markets in the Tung Chung New Town Extension Area, Hung Shui Kiu New Development Area and Tin Shui Wai. If necessary, the Government will study the need and feasibility of providing new public markets, and conduct a comprehensive review of existing public markets.

5. The Government will establish a dedicated team to conduct a comprehensive review of public markets, formulate specific and on-going measures in a systematic manner and put in resources, with a view to improving the facilities and management of public markets, as well as revitalising existing public markets. The review will cover the positioning of public markets, distribution of existing and new markets, management mode and structure, rental adjustment mechanism, hardware improvement and ways to handle markets with relatively low patronage, etc.

### Keep Clean Campaign

6. In the coming five years, we will deploy additional resources to improve environmental cleanliness, and will continue to step up effort in law enforcement and prosecution. Since late June 2017, FEHD has formed six dedicated enforcement teams (DETs) against public cleanliness offences. Each team comprises a Senior Foreman and four to five Foremen. The DETs will strengthen prosecution in various hygiene black spots, such as littering, spitting, dog fouling and unauthorised display of bills and posters. At present, these dedicated enforcement teams are stationed in six districts, namely Eastern District, Central and Western District, Mongkok, Sham Shui Po, North District and Yuen Long. From late June to late September 2017 (about three months), the DETs issued a total of about 1 000 fixed penalty notices (FPNs), and there has been significant improvement in 21 hygiene blackspots. We propose to deploy additional DETs in different districts throughout the territory to step up law enforcement efforts.

7. FEHD implemented a six-month pilot scheme on the installation of Internet Protocol cameras (the Pilot Scheme) from late December 2016 to late June 2017, under which Internet Protocol (IP) cameras have been installed at a total of six illegal refuse dumping blackspots in Central and Western, Sham Shui Po and Yuen Long Districts to step up surveillance on

illegal dumping of refuse and to assist in the planning of more effective law enforcement actions. The Pilot Scheme has to a certain extent achieved the intended effects. After completion of the Pilot Scheme, FEHD conducted evaluations at the end of June, July and August respectively and found that the situation of illegal dumping of refuse at the six targeted blackspots has significantly improved. Since the Pilot Scheme has achieved satisfactory results, FEHD plans to extend the scheme to cover all the 18 districts from the first quarter of 2018. In this respect, FEHD has consulted District Councils (DCs) on the installation of IP cameras in the districts and initially obtained their support. From a wider policy perspective, the success of the Pilot Scheme has reflected that environmental hygiene is not an impossible task but just a matter of making efforts. To effectively clean up our city, it is necessary to enhance civic-mindedness. Apart from FEHD's efforts to strengthen cleansing and enforcement, publicity and education are also very important, including showing public disapproval of improper refuse disposal and other behavior detrimental to environmental hygiene.

#### Sustainable Fisheries Development

8. The Government has been supporting the local fisheries industry towards sustainable development. We set up in 2014 a \$500 million Sustainable Fisheries Development Fund (SFDF) to help fishermen adopt a sustainable and high value-added operation mode and to provide funding for programmes and research. So far, SFDF has approved eight projects, including those on improving aquaculture and fisheries-related ecotourism, with a total commitment of over \$40 million. We will continue to encourage the industry to make use of SFDF to enhance its overall competitiveness.

9. To reduce the stocking density of the existing fish culture zones (FCZs) and improve their culture environment, we are planning to expand Yim Tin Tsai FCZ and introduce the relevant legislative amendments into the LegCo in 2018.

#### Strategy and Action Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance in relation to the Agriculture and Fisheries Industry

10. Following the promulgation of the Hong Kong Strategy and Action Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance in July, the Government will commission a consultancy study within this year to devise an antimicrobial resistance surveillance plan for local livestock and fish farms. Meanwhile, we will liaise with the veterinary and agricultural and fishery

sectors to encourage and facilitate their use of the Sustainable Agricultural Development Fund (SADF) and SFDF for undertaking pilot projects to engage veterinary services for the livestock and fish farms on areas such as disease prevention, diagnosis, treatment and vaccine procurement, with a view to facilitating the provision of pro-active professional veterinary support to local farmers.

#### Facilitating the Utilisation of Industrial Buildings for Technology-Based Agricultural Production

11. The Government has completed the review on facilitating the technology or mechanisation-based agricultural production (including new agro-technology such as hydroponics and aquaculture) in industrial buildings. In this respect, the Town Planning Board has revised the definition of terms used in statutory plans to allow for technology or mechanisation-based agricultural productions (including hydroponics and aquaculture etc.) to be regarded generally as “Non-polluting Industrial Use” always permitted in industrial buildings without the need for separate application to the Board. Moreover, the Lands Department is drawing up guidelines to make it clear that this use in general does not contravene the “Industrial Purposes” stipulated in land lease.

#### Implementation of Further Bio-Security Improvement Measures along the Live Poultry Supply Chain

12. Having regard to the findings of the Consultancy Study on the Way Forward of Live Poultry Trade in Hong Kong and the result of the public consultation, the Government will maintain the existing policy to allow the sale and importation of live poultry. We will study how to implement the bio-security improvement measures recommended by the consultant to prevent avian influenza (AI) risks in a more comprehensive manner. Such measures include introducing vaccination against H7N9 AI virus at local chicken farms, strengthening AI testing, reducing staying time of minor poultry at the wholesale market, enhancing the segregation of humans and live poultry at retail outlets. We will also develop pragmatic and practical options for the relocation of Cheung Sha Wan Temporary Wholesale Poultry Market.

#### Enhancing Animal Welfare

13. The Government attaches great importance to enhancing animal welfare. We will continue to work pragmatically and strike a reasonable balance between protecting animal welfare and safeguarding public

hygiene and safety in the local context. To further enhance the protection of animal welfare, we will study the existing legislation related to animal welfare, including exploring the introduction of a concept of positive duty of care on animal keepers, by making reference to international experience and trend in the light of the actual situation in Hong Kong.

## **On-going Initiatives**

### Timely Updating of Local Food Safety Standards and Regulatory Arrangements

14. We have been closely monitoring the international trend and practice in safeguarding food safety for timely updating of our food safety standards and regulatory arrangements. Having reviewed the regulation of metallic contaminants in food under the existing legislation, we considered that enhanced regulation is required to better protect public health, facilitate effective regulation and promote harmonisation between local and international standards. A three-month public consultation exercise on proposed amendments to the maximum levels of metallic contaminants in food was concluded in early September this year. We intend to submit the amendment regulations to the LegCo in 2018. We are reviewing the existing statutory control of other harmful substances (including toxins) in food, and aim to conduct consultation on enhanced control in 2018.

### Enhancing Food Safety Testing Capability

15. The Government Laboratory will continue to study the feasibility of reprovisioning and expanding the Food Safety Laboratory to enhance its testing capability and operational efficiency for tests relating to food safety.

### Promotion of Healthy Eating

16. We will continue to work closely with the Committee on Reduction of Salt and Sugar in Food to implement a strategic plan for reducing the levels of salt and sugar in food. The plan includes promoting healthy eating in pre-primary institutions and primary schools, enhancing transparency of information on “low-salt-and-sugar” food products, implementation of the “calorie” indication pilot scheme at staff canteens of public hospitals, and strengthening publicity and education. The Department of Health has launched the “Salt Reduction Scheme for School Lunches” in the 2017/18 school year for which students in around 440

primary schools will be supplied with sodium-reduced lunches. We will introduce the “Salt/Sugar Label Scheme for Prepackaged Food” this October to help consumers identify “low-salt-and-sugar” products.

### Policy on Burial

17. The Government is determined to take forward the burial policy by adopting a three-pronged approach to cater for the long-term public demand for facilities and services for disposal of ashes, namely, regulating private columbaria, increasing the supply of public niches and promoting green burial.

18. To further regulate the operation of private columbaria, the Private Columbaria Ordinance (the Ordinance) has come into operation since 30 June 2017. The appointment of the Licensing Board and Appeal Board was announced on 8 September and 29 September respectively. The Licensing Board will start to receive applications for specified instruments on 30 December 2017. We endeavour to implement the Ordinance and will closely monitor the situation to explore how to enhance the regulatory regime (including legislative amendments if necessary).

19. To increase the supply of public niches, the Government has been actively promoting the district-based columbarium development scheme. Hitherto, we have consulted nine DCs on 14 projects<sup>1</sup> respectively, together providing a total of about 590 000 new niches (representing two-thirds of the total number of new niches under planning). The Government will continue to consult the DCs on the remaining projects to fortify the supply of public niches for the coming 15 years. In the long run, since suitable sites for columbaria are limited, we will conduct in-depth study for more sustainable options (e.g. introducing a time limit for rental niches to enhance reuse).

20. In the interest of sustainability, the Government is taking active steps to promote green burial by encouraging the public to use a more environmental-friendly and sustainable way for handling ashes of the deceased, including scattering the ashes in Gardens of Remembrance or at sea. The Government will continue with its strenuous efforts in publicity and promotion. In recent years, there has been an upward trend in the

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<sup>1</sup> The 14 projects are respectively located in Cheung Chau, Diamond Hill, Wo Hop Shek, Tsang Tsui, Tsing Tsuen Road, Sandy Ridge, Cape Collinson, Wong Nai Chung Road, Shek Mun, Kwai Chung (two sites), Lai Chi Yuen and Siu Ho Wan (two sites).

percentage of choosing green burial for the deceased by their families. In 2016, the FEHD handled more than 4 900 green burial cases, accounting for about 10.5% of the total number of deaths in Hong Kong. As at the end of August 2017, FEHD handled more than 3 800 green burial cases, accounting for about 12.3% of the total number of deaths in Hong Kong.

#### Assistance to Hawkers

21. In June 2013, the Government implemented an assistance scheme in 43 fixed-pitch hawker areas to reduce fire risks. As at August 2017, 508 hawker stalls which were located directly in front of staircase discharge points of adjacent buildings or obstructing emergency vehicular access had been relocated. Regarding on-site reconstruction to meet specific fire service requirements, the Government will continue to communicate with hawkers in hawker areas and encourage them to make decisions early, i.e. either applying for reconstruction of their stalls or surrendering their licences for an ex-gratia payment. We are monitoring closely the implementation of the assistance scheme.

#### New Agriculture Policy

22. We will implement the key initiatives of the New Agriculture Policy, including the establishment of an Agricultural Park (Agri-Park) in Kwu Tung South, the New Territories. Following completion of the engineering feasibility study of the Agri-Park earlier, another consultant is undertaking the work of detailed investigation, design and construction for the Agri-Park, paving the way for Phase 1 of the project. We have consulted the relevant DC and stakeholders on the plan of Phase 1 of the Agri-Park. The construction of proposed road for the Agri-Park is scheduled for gazettal in the last quarter of this year.

23. The \$500 million Sustainable Agricultural Development Fund (SADF) was formally launched in late 2016 to provide funding support for the modernisation and sustainable development of local agriculture. SADF aims at supporting application-oriented projects that would enhance agricultural productivity and output, or help farmers switch to sustainable or high value-added operations so as to raise the overall competitiveness of the sector. In addition, in order to help farmers enhance their productivity and operational efficiency, the Farm Improvement Scheme under SADF provides direct grants to support eligible local farmers to acquire mechanised farming equipment and materials. So far, a commitment of about \$4 million of grant has been approved.

24. In tandem with the development of Agri-Park and in response to calls for better protection and utilisation of existing farmland, FHB and the Development Bureau will jointly commission a consultancy study to identify relatively large areas of quality agricultural land for possible designation as Agricultural Priority Areas, and explore suitable policies and measures to provide incentives to encourage landowners to put fallow farmland into agricultural use in the medium to long term. Preparation for the tender exercise of the consultancy study is currently underway.

#### Testing and Transportation Hub for Competition Horses

25. The Hong Kong Jockey Club (HKJC) is collaborating with Mainland authorities on the development of HKJC's Guangzhou Horse Training Centre in Conghua, Guangzhou, as a training venue for Hong Kong's competition horses. To enable frequent movement of horses between the two places whilst ensuring that their health status is maintained at the same level, an "equine disease-free zone" in Conghua is being established through close cooperation between Hong Kong and the relevant Mainland authorities. The quarantine procedures for cross-boundary movement will also be enhanced. Meanwhile, we are actively upgrading the testing services for equine infectious diseases at the veterinary laboratory of AFCD. This would help enhance Hong Kong's capability in testing and scientific research on equine infectious diseases, and facilitate Hong Kong's development into a testing centre of infectious diseases and a transportation hub for international competition horses.

#### Setting up a Control Scheme for the Trading of Toothfish in Hong Kong

26. The trade volume and commercial activities in relation to toothfish in Hong Kong have been increasing over the years. We propose to implement a control scheme for the trading of toothfish to meet the requirements of the Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources with a view to attaining the objective of conserving Antarctic marine living resources. Drafting of the proposed legislation is in progress and the draft legislation is expected to be introduced into the LegCo in 2018.

#### Amending the Veterinary Surgeons Registration Ordinance

27. In accordance with the new provisions in the Veterinary Surgeons Registration (Amendment) Ordinance 2015 that have been passed, we have consulted the veterinary profession and the Veterinary Surgeons Board of Hong Kong on the arrangements for electing members of the profession to



the Board. We are drawing up the relevant subsidiary legislation for LegCo's scrutiny so that the Board can proceed with matters in relation to the election of veterinary surgeons.

### **Advice Sought**

28. Members are invited to note and comment on the content of this paper.

**Food and Health Bureau**  
**October 2017**