

**Speaking Note for Secretary for Food and Health
at the Special Meeting of the Finance Committee
on 11 April 2019**

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| Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene |
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Chairman and Honourable Members,

The Food and Health Bureau (FHB) is committed to ensuring food safety and environmental hygiene as well as promoting the sustainable development of the local agriculture and fisheries industry.

2. In the 2019-20 Estimates, about \$9.17 billion is earmarked for recurrent expenditure in the policy portfolio of “Environment and Food”, representing an increase of about \$870 million (10.5%) over the previous year and accounting for 2.1% of recurrent government expenditure.

Refurbishment of Public Toilets

3. The Government will refurbish the public toilets managed by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) by phases. Based on our preliminary estimate, refurbishment works for about 240 public toilets will commence in the coming five years, incurring a total expenditure of over \$600 million. FEHD will take into account factors such as the maintenance condition, the utilisation rates and public views in determining the toilets to be refurbished and their priorities..

4. FEHD will also improve the on-going management of public toilets, conduct deep cleansing on a regular basis, step up inspections, and monitor contractors' performance and compliance with the cleansing service contracts.

Public Markets

5. Having obtained support from the Yuen Long District Council and the Islands District Council for the new public market projects in Tin Shui Wai and Tung Chung Town Centre respectively last October, we are pressing ahead with the engineering and technical studies. We are also identifying sites for building public markets in Tseung Kwan O and Kwu Tung North New Development Area.

6. As to existing markets, the overhaul of Aberdeen Market is the pioneering project under the Market Modernisation Programme. In addition, we are planning a fundamental overhaul for three other markets and refurbishment and minor improvement works for at least three markets for commencement progressively within this year as far as practicable.

Environmental Hygiene

7. FEHD has set up 19 dedicated enforcement teams to strengthen enforcement actions against cleanliness offences, and plans to set up additional teams this year.

8. On the application of technologies, FEHD will continue to introduce automated cleansing technologies and equipment for trial use at different venues. The Department is also conducting studies to improve the

design of the ovitrap, and use night vision or thermal imaging cameras with artificial intelligence to monitor the extent of rodent activities. As for pest prevention and control work, FEHD is testing the effectiveness of a new mosquito trapping device and a new rodent trapping device driven by pressurised gas.

Food Safety

9. The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of FEHD is following up the Director of Audit's Report released late last year and the recommendations of the LegCo Public Accounts Committee, and actively reviewing its daily operations and workflow to implement specific improvement measures in various areas. CFS has also set up a dedicated team to upgrade its IT systems by phases starting from the end of this year, with a view to providing more support to frontline staff and enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of its food safety work.

Supply and Regulation of Niches

10. To increase the supply of public niches, we are implementing the district-based columbarium development scheme. The columbarium projects at Wong Nai Chung Road in Wan Chai, Tsang Tsui in Tuen Mun and Wo Hop Shek in North District will be completed this year, providing a total of about 205 000 new niches, about 21 000 of which are expected to be open for application in mid-2019.

11. The Private Columbaria Licensing Board is speedily handling over 300 applications for specified instruments received from about 140 private columbaria.

12. To enhance promotion of green burial, FEHD opened a new garden of remembrance in Kwai Chung and launched the central register for green burial in January this year.

Animal Welfare

13. The Government attaches great importance to animal welfare and animal management. We are preparing to conduct a public consultation on reviewing the existing legislation related to animal welfare. We will then propose amendments to the legislation, including introducing a concept of positive duty of care into the law and reviewing the existing maximum penalty for animal cruelty.

14. In particular, to enhance the financial support to animal welfare organisations, we will allocate an addition of \$1.5 million this year to support their work in promoting animal welfare and adoption.

New Agriculture Policy

15. We strive to implement the New Agriculture Policy. Funding for the construction works of Agri-Park Phase 1 is supported by the LegCo panel. The Public Works Subcommittee will continue the consideration of funding application next week. The construction works is expected to commence by the end of this year if funding is approved by the Finance Committee afterwards. We are also conducting a consultancy study on Agricultural Priority Areas so that fallow farmland could be rehabilitated for agricultural use.

16. The Sustainable Agricultural Development Fund (SADF) has approved seven applications so far, and also provides funding direct for farmers to acquire farming equipment, involving a total commitment of about \$88 million.

Fisheries Development

17. As for fisheries, the Sustainable Fisheries Development Fund (SFDF) has approved 14 projects with a total commitment of about \$77 million to improve aquaculture and help fishermen acquire modernized capture or culture equipment.

18. In addition, we will conduct environmental impact assessments for designating new fish culture zones and issue new marine fish culture licences to promote the development of aquaculture.

19. We are pleased to see that the agriculture and fisheries sectors both benefit direct from SADF and SFDF, while other support measures are also bearing fruits. With the concerted efforts of the trade and the continuous support of the Government, the agriculture and fisheries sectors will be able to explore new areas for long-term sustainable development.

20. Chairman, my colleagues and I are happy to answer questions from Members.