



中華人民共和國香港特別行政區政府總部食物及衛生局
Food and Health Bureau, Government Secretariat
The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
The People's Republic of China

[English Translation]

28 February 2019

Clerk to Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road
Central
Hong Kong
(Attention: Miss Josephine SO)

Dear Miss SO,

Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene
Motions passed under Agenda Items III & V
at the Meeting on 12 February 2019

Regarding the motions passed at the Panel meeting held on 12 February 2019, our consolidated response is as follows:

Application of Technologies in Enhancing
Environmental Hygiene and Pest Control

We agree to the use of technologies on suitable occasions to enhance efficiency of environmental hygiene and pest control work and

support the duties performed by staff. We will draw up a blueprint for application of technologies as soon as possible.

The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (“FEHD”) has been exploring the application of suitable technologies with the Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks Corporation and other technology companies, as well as studying the use of technologies to enhance the quality and efficiency of public cleansing and pest control services. If suitable technologies are identified, we will conduct preliminary tests, make adjustments in the light of the local environment and actual conditions, and then assess feasibility, effectiveness and suitability of the technologies. Technologies that can enhance our services will be extended to applicable environments across the territory.

The estimated expenditure of FEHD on the application of technologies for improving environmental hygiene and enhancing pest control work in the coming year is about \$100 million. Apart from the application of technologies, we will continue to step up environmental hygiene and cleansing efforts. On the enforcement front, FEHD has set up 19 dedicated enforcement teams (“DETs”) to initiate prosecution against litter offenders. It plans to set up additional DETs to strengthen enforcement efforts in the coming year. Public education will also be promoted. In addition to the distribution of pamphlets and leaflets, FEHD will continue to enhance public awareness of keeping Hong Kong clean through various channels, including television, radio, major public transport facilities, Facebook and Instagram pages of Keep Clean Ambassador Ah Tak and other publicity activities.

Development of Mariculture

The Government strives to promote the sustainable development of aquaculture. We have been gradually implementing various measures according to the recommendations of the Committee on Sustainable

Fisheries¹, including enhancing technical support and training to the fisheries sector; promoting the adoption of advanced and environmentally-friendly culture practices, applying new technology for monitoring water quality and red tides, funding aquaculture-related research projects through the Sustainable Fisheries Development Fund (“SFDF”), reviewing the current management and regulatory regime of aquaculture, exploring the designation of new fish culture zones (“FCZs”) and issuance of new marine fish culture licences (“MFCLs”), etc. The specific measures include:

- (i) In recent years the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (“AFCD”) has been introducing new technologies such as launching the real-time water quality monitoring system and the trials on real-time phytoplankton imaging and computer modelling tools to detect water quality changes and red tides, so as to give timely alerts and reduce the risks of red tides to fish farmers. In the past three years, AFCD issued a total of about 200 alerts to fish farmers;
- (ii) The Environmental Protection Department has implemented various measures over the years to protect and improve water quality, including strictly enforcing control on sewage discharge, planning for sewage collection and treatment facilities, reducing the potential impact of development projects on water quality through environmental impact assessments and planning. AFCD has also deployed biofilters and carried out sediment removal works in some suitable FCZs to further improve the water quality of the FCZs. In recent years, there is an overall improvement in the environmental conditions in most FCZs where nitrogen loading (the most serious environmental problem brought about by mariculture) was reduced by more than 90% from 1990 to 2018;
- (iii) To enhance the skill level of the mariculture sector and its competitiveness, AFCD has been studying fish culture operations and

¹ The Committee on Sustainable Fisheries was established by the Government in December 2006 to study the long-term goals, the direction and feasible options for sustainable development of the local fisheries sector. The Report of the Committee on Sustainable Fisheries (LC Paper CB(2)1472/09-10(03)) was discussed at the FSEH panel meeting on 11 May 2010.

new species, and transfers relevant technical skills to fish farmers. Also, AFCD is planning to set up a modern mariculture demonstration farm in Hong Kong to serve as a base for promoting modern mariculture technologies as well as training and research purposes. Moreover, AFCD has adopted a multi-pronged approach in promoting modern fish farms and fish health management practices to fishermen through training workshops, seminars and on-farm demonstrations, with a view to helping them adopt a more efficient culture method and improved culture technologies. So far, more than 2 200 fishermen have joined these training courses. AFCD will continue to work closely with the sector and provide training to fishermen;

- (iv) The Government has been providing financial assistance through SFDF since 2014 to help the fisheries sector move towards sustainable or high value-added operations and enhance the overall competitiveness of the fisheries sector. Eleven applications have been approved, among which nine projects seek to promote the development of local aquaculture. To promote modernisation of the fisheries sector, the Equipment Improvement Project has been set up under SFDF to help fish farmers acquire equipment for enhancing productivity. AFCD will maintain close liaison with the sector to further promote SFDF, and provide technical support to applicants and streamlining application procedures; and
- (v) AFCD has also been strengthening technical support in relation to fish health management and help fish farmers enhance their biosecurity measures and management of farms. Through funding under SFDF to the Jockey Club College of Veterinary Medicine and Life Sciences of City University of Hong Kong, on-site veterinary and vet drug prescription services are provided to fish farms to improve the culture efficacy.

Apart from the above measures, AFCD and the Fish Marketing Organization (“FMO”) have spared no effort in marketing promotion work. Since 2005, AFCD has been implementing the Accredited Fish Farm

Scheme (“AFFS”) to build up a brand name of quality and safety of local aquaculture products so as to enhance the competitiveness of the sector. As of January 2019, 120 fish farms, representing about 23% of the total area of local fish farms, are registered under AFFS. AFCD and FMO have also been actively publicising local quality fisheries products through various promotional activities. Currently, clients include supermarket chains, green food stores, online and mobile phone sales platforms and the catering industry. To help fish farmers draw up plans to produce local fisheries products that could meet market demand with greater certainty and confidence, FMO is planning to sign procurement contracts with some of the fish farmers registered under AFFS. AFCD has helped match fish farmers registered under AFFS with business clients under a project approved under SFDF recently for opening up sales channels in the catering industry. AFCD also organises FarmFest in conjunction with the sector to promote local fisheries products, develop local brands and provide quality seafood and delicacies to the public. Now in its thirteenth edition, FarmFest is a well-received function that successfully promotes local fisheries products.

Regarding relief for natural disasters, the Government provides urgent financial assistance under the Emergency Relief Fund (“ERF”) to those affected in the agriculture and fisheries sectors, including fish farmers, to help resume their operations. The Government adjusts the amounts of the grants annually, taking into account the operational situation as well as changes in expenditure of the fisheries sector. Mariculturists in need of capital to re-establish their business may apply to AFCD for low-interest loans from the Kadoorie Agricultural Aid Loan Fund as the working capital. Taking the example of Super Typhoon Mangkhut last year, AFCD granted a total of about \$6.5 million to 433 mariculturists under ERF.

Besides, to facilitate the development of mariculture, upgrading and switching to a sustainable mode of operation, and adoption of modern culture techniques, the Government has proposed designating new FCZs at suitable locations in Hong Kong waters, as well as resuming the issuance of new MFCLs. Members of the FSEH Panel supported this policy direction at the captioned meeting.

As stipulated in the Marine Fish Culture Ordinance (Cap. 353), all marine fish culture activities are required to operate under licence. At present, the licence conditions require that the licence holders shall actively engage in marine fish culture activities. Marine fish culture involves the use of resources of public waters. As the licensing authority, AFCD has the responsibility to ensure the effective use of such resources. To ensure that the existing licenced fish farms are fully used for mariculture purpose and to improve the current idling situation of fish rafts, AFCD will formulate an objective and appropriate mariculture standard to strengthen the management of existing mariculture activities. In drawing up the preliminary mariculture standard proposal, AFCD has taken into consideration the existing mariculture practices of fish farmers, environmental factors and cost analysis. AFCD will provide technical advice and allow sufficient time for the trade's compliance.

AFCD is currently consulting the trade on the criteria on tightening the management and will only implement the new requirements after thorough discussion and consultation with the trade. AFCD has held five consultation sessions on the proposed mariculture standard over the past two months. AFCD will continue to listen to views of the trade, and will attend the meetings of Sai Kung and Tai Po District Councils in early March to further collect views on strengthening the management of existing mariculture activities. In addition, the FSEH Panel will hold a special meeting on 2 April, inviting representatives of the fisheries sector to express views on the proposed mariculture standard.

Yours sincerely,

[Signed]

(Gilford LAW)

for Secretary for Food and Health

c.c. Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation
Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene