



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

Our Ref.: FHB/F/6/14/11  
Your Ref.: CB2/PL/FE

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29 July 2020

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

Dear Miss SO,

**Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene**

**List of follow-up actions**

I refer to your letter dated 14 July 2020. Please find our response to the items concerning the “Financial commitment for culling of pigs and follow-up work due to African Swine Fever (ASF)” and the “Progress of the work in tackling the threat of antimicrobial resistance in food animals” on the list of follow-up actions at **Annex A** and **Annex B** respectively.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "Amor WONG", written over a blue line.

(Mr Amor WONG)  
for Secretary for Food and Health

**Response to items concerning “Financial commitment for culling of pigs and follow-up work due to African Swine Fever (ASF)”**

**Easing the financial pressure on live pig industries**

The low supply of live pigs and surge in price have caused impact on the public and the trade. In view of the economic situation in Hong Kong, the Government has announced a series of helping measures. Among others, these measures covered industries affected by ASF and the supply of live pigs, with a view to easing their financial pressure. These measures include reducing rental for stalls in public markets of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department, waiving the licence fee for fresh provision shops, slaughterhouses and pig farms until September 2020, as well as waiving the pig examination fee for slaughterhouses for a year in 2020/21. As at end 2019, there were 2 732 fresh provision shops selling pork, 43 local pig farms and two slaughterhouses in the live pig industries. Licence is not required for other players in the live pig industries (such as transportation companies and buyers etc.), and we do not have the relevant figures.

In addition, further to the funding approval of the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council given at its meeting on 28 February 2020, pig owners affected by the two culling operations in May last year have received the relevant statutory compensation and ex-gratia payments in April, involving a total amount of about \$33 million.

**Supporting and assisting the local pig rearing industry**

The Government has been implementing various support measures to facilitate the development of the local pig rearing industry. The Government established the "Sustainable Agricultural Development Fund" (SADF) in 2016 to foster the sustainable development and enhance the overall competitiveness of the agricultural industry. In early 2019, the SADF allocated about \$15 million to support the Jockey Club College of Veterinary Medicine and Life Sciences of the City University of Hong Kong for the provision of veterinary services (including disease diagnosis and treatment) to local pig farmers as well as the procurement of necessary vaccines and medications, and formulation of tailor-made disease prevention and management programmes for pig farms, with a view to improving pig productivity, enhancing food safety, and strengthening early warning and monitoring of diseases. In addition, the Hong Kong Productivity Council has received a grant of about \$5 million from the SADF and has commenced a demonstration project on advanced sewage treatment technologies in pig farms to enhance the sewage treatment technologies for local pig farms. A "Farm Improvement Scheme" has also been established under the SADF to provide direct grants of a maximum amount of \$30,000 to local pig farmers for the acquisition of small farming equipment and materials, such as feed mixers, disease preventive facilities, etc., to enhance rearing techniques, productivity and biosecurity of pig farms.

Apart from the SADF, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) is also responsible for managing the Agricultural Aid Loan Fund, which offers a low-interest loan to farmers for farm development and working capital to resolve their financial difficulties. There is no financial limit for the agricultural loan, and currently the amount of unsecured loan available is up to \$130,000. In order to provide targeted

assistance for pig farms affected by ASF, a special loan scheme was set up under the J.E. Joseph Trust Fund in November 2018 to provide a low-interest unsecured loan up to \$800,000 with an annual interest rate of about 0.1 per cent, subject to the scale of farms. In addition, the Government also announced in August 2019 the waiving of licence fee for pig farms until September this year.

The Government introduced a voluntary surrender scheme for pig farms and the ex-gratia payment scheme in 2006 to enable pig farmers to voluntarily cease operation. As a corollary, the Government decided to stop the issue of new licences and freeze the rearing capacity of those pig farms that chose not to join the voluntary surrender scheme that year in order to gradually reduce the public health and environmental pollution problems brought by the pig rearing industry in Hong Kong. Currently, the Government does not have any plan to change the policy of limiting the number of pig farms and the total rearing capacity. There are now 43 licensed pig farms in Hong Kong with the total maximum rearing capacity being 74 640 heads. These farms are rearing about 63 000 heads of pigs in total.

### **Exploring importation of live pigs from other places**

In regards to the proposal from the trade on importing live pigs from other places (such as Thailand, Korea and Malaysia) in order to increase the source of live pig's supply, the Government is willing and has been exploring the feasibility with the trade and relevant stakeholders, as well as to coordinate accordingly. However, importation of live food animals entails public health and food safety considerations, including the need of a stringent protocol for testing and quarantine in order to prevent the spread of infectious diseases via animals and ensure that animals imported are safe for consumption. In addition, the Government also needs to consider in details the level of surveillance and management of animal health by relevant authorities of exporting places and the transparency of such system. As food animals from various sources may entail different risks, we have to exercise caution.

Since September last year, AFCD has been in contact with the relevant authorities or consulate generals in Hong Kong of the exporting places concerned to express the import intentions of the local trade. Subsequently, AFCD has been actively liaising with the relevant stakeholders and organising meetings to discuss the feasibility and the follow-up work required for importing live pigs from relevant countries. These include the control and prevention plan against ASF in the country and the farms to be provided by the exporting countries and the standard operating procedures and contingency plans to be prepared by the importers etc. for further risk assessment by AFCD.

AFCD has received information about importing live pigs from Korea from the trade, as well as initial information provided by relevant authorities in Korea on their local ASF preventive measures. AFCD is further following up with the relevant authorities in Korea and the local trade, whilst assessments are still ongoing. If importing live pigs from Korea is assessed to be acceptable, relevant importation agreements would entail not only the drawing up of quarantine measures, but also logistics arrangements, legal concerns, as well as communication and collaboration with different parties. Hence, there is no specific timetable at this stage.

AFCD's officers also visited to Singapore in January this year to learn about the local regulation of importing live pigs from Malaysia by sea and Malaysia's regulation on local live pigs, with a view to enhancing AFCD's understanding of the existing practices in other places for live pig importation such as assessment and regulation.

**Response to items concerning “Progress of the work in tackling the threat of antimicrobial resistance in food animals”**

- (a) According to the Veterinary Surgeons Board of Hong Kong, there are 1 074 registered veterinary surgeons in Hong Kong as at 30 June 2020. The Jockey Club College of Veterinary Medicine and Life Sciences of the City University of Hong Kong has currently engaged a total of six veterinary surgeons (two each for providing services for local pig farms, poultry farms and fish farms respectively). The number of local pig farms, chicken farms and fish farms (covering mariculture and pond fish farms) are 43, 29 and 1 250 respectively.
- (b) Following the Hong Kong Strategy and Action Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance, the Government has commenced work on the surveillance of the AMR in human health, animal health and food sectors under the “One Health” concept. AFCD has started conducting surveillance of antimicrobial usage and antimicrobial resistance on local food animal farms since mid-2019. Information collected from the surveillance would be useful in assisting assessment of the AMR situation in food animal farms in Hong Kong. There is thus far no evidence found that antimicrobials are being misused or abused in local livestock and fish farms.