

**For discussion on
22 October 2018**

LegCo Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene

**Policy Address 2018-19
Policy Initiatives of the Food and Health Bureau**

Vision

The Food Branch of the Food and Health Bureau (FHB) is committed to formulating, co-ordinating and implementing policies on agriculture, fisheries, food safety, veterinary public health and environmental hygiene so as to promote public health and raise the living standards of our citizens, with a view to building a healthy society.

New Initiatives

Environmental Hygiene

2. The Government is determined to improve our cityscape and will adopt a multi-pronged approach in enhancing environmental hygiene and cleanliness. On top of additional resource allocation, we will apply innovation and technologies in street cleansing through the use of machines and automation, reinforce public education and step up enforcement.

3. Maintaining a hygienic environment is also the fundamental means to address pest problems. It is an on-going task that relies on the support and cooperation of each and every citizen. As far as the Government is concerned, inter-departmental co-ordination is of utmost importance in the prevention and control of pests. The Anti-Mosquito Steering Committee was re-organised and upgraded as the Pest Control Steering Committee in

July 2018. In addition to mosquito control, the Steering Committee extends its coverage to other pest control issues with a view to enhancing inter-departmental co-ordination.

4. The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) will strive to improve the existing surveillance system for mosquitoes and rodents by application of technologies. To enhance the alert function of the ovitrap indices for *Aedes albopictus*, the arrangement for releasing the results of the indices has been improved with more frequent updates. In this connection, additional results for the phased Area Ovitrap Index for *Aedes albopictus* (AOI) will be released starting from September 2018 to keep the public abreast of the latest situation of mosquito infestation. FEHD will also continue to announce the monthly AOI of various areas to give the public an overview of the infestation level of mosquitoes to facilitate timely implementation of mosquito prevention and control measures. On the anti-rodent front, the Government will keep enhancing its efforts in rodent control throughout the territory. Inter-departmental co-ordination will be strengthened to carry out targeted rodent control operations in rodent-infested areas. In view of the effectiveness of its anti-rodent operations at designated target areas, FEHD will continue to adopt this approach in various districts and provide technical support to relevant departments.

5. As regards the application of technologies for the provision of municipal services, FEHD will continue to introduce automated cleansing technologies and equipment for trial use at different venues, including pressure washer surface cleaners, mini-mechanical sweepers, leaf blowers and solar-powered compacting refuse bins. FEHD will also explore suitable equipment and modes of operation to further improve the hygiene of public toilets and to enhance the efficiency and quality of service, including the renovation of 23 public toilets in the vicinity of tourist attractions for their improved ventilation, deodorisation and tidiness. Besides, the pilot scheme on the installation of Internet Protocol cameras will be extended to cover all of the 18 districts within this year.

Public Markets

6. The Government has completed the studies on site selection of new public markets, and proposed a market with brand new design to be built on the section of Tin Fook Road outside Tin Shui Wai MTR Station, and another one to be provided in Tung Chung Town Centre on the lower floors of a commercial building in Area 6 adjacent to Tung Chung MTR Station. We will soon consult the local communities on the abovementioned sites and market design, and will further explore the mode of operation of the new markets. Meanwhile, we are identifying sites for public markets in Tseung Kwan O and Kwu Tung North New Development Area so as to provide more choices to the public in purchasing fresh food.

7. As to existing public markets, a majority of them were built decades ago, many of which are situated in prime locations. The Government will comprehensively examine the usage and development potential of these market sites to formulate appropriate development plans so as to meet the policy objectives of optimising land uses, benefitting the public and promoting district development. Specifically, for public markets of low utilisation, we will consider changing their land use or demolishing them for redevelopment to release space for community facilities much needed by the public.

8. In addition, a funding of \$2 billion has been earmarked in the Budget this year to implement the Market Modernisation Programme. The Programme has been launched with the overhaul of Aberdeen Market as the pioneering project, which is intended to serve as a prototype for other markets. The modernisation of public markets will not proceed by retrofitting air conditioning systems alone. Rather, we will undertake refurbishment, in-situ redevelopment or relocation as appropriate with a view to providing the public with quality municipal facilities and services.

Enhancing Animal Welfare

9. The Government attaches great importance to promoting and safeguarding animal welfare. For amending the legislation related to animal welfare, we are currently mapping out the major direction and drawing up preliminary proposals, with a view to consulting the public early next year on, among others, exploring raising the penalty for acts of animal cruelty and putting the responsibility of positive duty of care of animals on animal keepers.

10. Besides, the Government completed in September 2018 a three-month public consultation on the proposed amendment to the responsibility requirement under the Road Traffic Ordinance (Cap. 374) for a driver to stop in case of a traffic accident involving injury to an animal. Most of the views received supported our proposal but there were different views on the coverage of animals. We are considering the views and plan to submit the proposed amendments to the Legislative Council (LegCo) in the first quarter of 2019.

Sustainable Fisheries Development

11. The Government has been supporting the local fisheries industry towards sustainable development. To expand rooms for the mariculture sector to further develop and help fishermen switch to other modes of operation, we are planning to designate new fish culture zones and issue new marine fish culture licences. We will finalise the proposal on the designation of new zones after consultation with stakeholders and completion of the statutory environmental impact assessment. We will also enhance management to ensure that the production capacity of the existing zones can be fully utilised.

12. 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. So far, SFDF has approved ten projects, including those on improving aquaculture and fisheries-related ecotourism, with a total commitment of over \$50 million. We will continue to encourage the sector to make use of SFDF to enhance its overall competitiveness.

Live Poultry Trade

13. The Government has been supporting the local livestock sector to enhance preventive and control measures against infectious livestock diseases in farms to safeguard public health. After considering the views of livestock farmers, the Government is following up on the amendment of the Public Health (Animals and Birds) (Licensing of Livestock Keeping) Regulation (Cap. 139L), to facilitate the relocation of chicken farms and improve their bio-security measures with a view to strengthening the prevention and control of avian influenza.

On-going Initiatives

Policy on Burial

14. 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, increasing the supply of public niches, regulating private columbaria, and promoting green burial.

15. To increase the supply of public niches, the Government will continue to promote the district-based columbarium development scheme¹, under which 14 projects are at different development and design stages, together providing a total of about 590 000 new niches (representing two

¹ Under the scheme, the Government has identified a total of 23 potential sites (excluding the site at Fu Shan in Sha Tin, which will be used for the reprovisioning of Fu Shan Public Mortuary instead) for public columbarium development. If all the potential sites can be fully implemented, they will provide about 900 000 public niches.

thirds of the total number of new niches under planning). During end-2018 to 2019, 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 respectively, accounting for about 205 000 new public niches, among which about 21 000 niches will be made available for allocation in end-2018 or early 2019, thus alleviating the demand for niches. The Government will continue to identify suitable sites for the construction of public columbaria, consult the District Councils (DCs) on columbarium projects and seek funding approval from the LegCo. In the long term, to ensure more sustainable use of land resources, we will introduce an extendable arrangement for newly allocated public niches. The subsidiary legislation amendments for the fee proposal will be tabled at the LegCo for scrutiny shortly.

16. Regarding the regulation of private columbaria, the Private Columbaria Licensing Board is accelerating the processing of more than 300 specified instrument applications² submitted by some 140 private columbaria. In parallel, the Private Columbaria Affairs Office will take stringent enforcement actions against unauthorised columbaria. We will continue to keep in view the implementation of the Private Columbaria Ordinance (Cap. 630) for the purpose of improving the regulatory regime.

17. We will continue to promote green burial (e.g. scattering of cremains in Gardens of Remembrance or at sea), which is an environmentally friendly, sustainable and simple means of ash disposal. In 2017, there were more than 6 500 green burial cases³, accounting for about 14.3% of the total number of deaths in Hong Kong. Between January and July 2018, there were nearly 4 200 green burial cases³, accounting for about 14.5% of the total number of deaths in Hong Kong. This reflects the growing popularity of green burial. In the coming year, we will step up promotion of green burial,

² Specified instrument means a licence, an exemption and a temporary suspension of liability.

³ The figure includes the number of green burial cases handled by FEHD and private cemeteries.

including increasing the number of Gardens of Remembrance, establishing a central register for green burial, and working with various sectors to boost its popularity.

New Agriculture Policy

18. We will continue to 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. The consultant of the Agri-Park is undertaking detailed design and site investigation work for the infrastructure support. In addition, the Government has considered the submissions on the Agri-Park works and provided written replies to all entities/organisations. The LegCo held a special meeting on 5 October 2018 to listen to the views of the public on Agri-Park Phase 1. We expect to submit a funding application for the Phase 1 works to the LegCo next year.

19. The Government launched the \$500 million Sustainable Agricultural Development Fund (SADF) in 2016 to provide funding support for the modernisation and sustainable development of local agriculture. Seven applications have been approved under SADF, involving about \$80 million. The funding granted is used to promote organic farming and improve the health and production of livestock. In addition, in order to help farmers enhance their productivity and operational efficiency, the Farm Improvement Scheme under SADF provides grants to support eligible local farmers to acquire mechanised farming equipment and materials. So far, a funding commitment of about \$5.8 million of grant has been approved.

20. In tandem with the development of the Agri-Park and in response to calls for better protection and utilisation of existing farmland, FHB and the Development Bureau have jointly commissioned 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. Since the study covers several thousand hectares, it is estimated that it may take several years to complete.

Testing and Transportation Hub for Competition Horses

21. The Conghua Racecourse developed by the Hong Kong Jockey Club in collaboration with the relevant Mainland authorities officially opened in late August 2018. It will become an important training venue for Hong Kong's competition horses. We will continue to enhance the testing services for equine infectious diseases at the veterinary laboratory of the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department and work with Mainland authorities to ensure smooth operation of the "Equine Disease-Free Zone" in Conghua, with a view to facilitating Hong Kong's development into a testing centre and a transportation hub for international competition horses.

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

22. Following the promulgation of the Hong Kong Strategy and Action Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance in July 2017, the Government has commissioned a consultancy study to devise an antimicrobial resistance surveillance plan for local livestock and fish farms. The study is expected to be completed in the first quarter of 2019, and the proposed surveillance plan will be finalised in consultation with the Expert Committee on Antimicrobial Resistance afterwards for timely implementation. To prepare for the implementation of the "veterinary prescription-only medication supply" policy, local universities and the Hong Kong Veterinary Association have been invited to provide support to facilitate the provision of veterinary services to food animal farms. Funding support will also be provided under SADF and SFDF for undertaking pilot projects for provision of veterinary services.

Election of Members from the Veterinary Profession to the Veterinary Surgeons Board of Hong Kong

23. To implement the amendment ordinance on the registration of veterinary surgeons, we are drawing up a subsidiary legislation for the arrangements for electing members of the veterinary profession to the Board. The draft legislation is expected to be introduced into the LegCo in the first quarter next year so that the Board can timely proceed with the preparation for the election of veterinary surgeons.

Enhancing the Capacity in Food Risk Analysis and Traceability

24. The Centre for Food Safety of FEHD is comprehensively upgrading and consolidating its information technology systems to enhance its capability in data collection and analysis, risk assessment and food traceability, and to interface with the “Trade Single Window”.

Timely Updating of Local Food Safety Standards and Regulatory Arrangements

25. We have been closely monitoring the international trend and practice in safeguarding food safety for timely updating of the local food safety standards and regulatory arrangements. We are reviewing the Harmful Substances in Food Regulations (Cap. 132AF), and aim to conduct public consultation on proposals for enhanced control in 2019.

Expanding the Food Safety Testing Capability of the Government Laboratory

26. The Government Laboratory (GL) has a shortfall of laboratory space. The GL has identified a suitable site for the construction of a GL complex that could accommodate facilities including the Food Safety Laboratory, and is consulting the relevant DC.

Promotion of Less-Salt-and-Sugar Diet

27. We will continue to work closely with the Committee on Reduction of Salt and Sugar in Food to cultivate a culture of low-salt-and-sugar diet. We will continue to actively promote the “Salt/Sugar” Label Scheme for Prepackaged Food Products, further encourage the trade to reformulate their food recipes, and strengthen publicity. We will strive hard to achieve those targets on reducing salt and sugar intake as set out in “Towards 2025: Strategy and Action Plan to Prevent and Control Non-communicable Diseases in Hong Kong”, i.e. a 30 per cent relative reduction in mean population daily intake of salt/sodium, halting the rise in diabetes and obesity, and containing the prevalence of raised blood pressure by 2025 or before.

Review on the Export Control of Powdered Formula

28. We launched a comprehensive and thorough review on the export control of powdered formula early this year. The review is underway at present. We will complete the review and release the results as soon as possible.

Advice Sought

29. Members are invited to note this paper and provide comments.

Food and Health Bureau
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