

# 立法會

## *Legislative Council*

LC Paper No. CB(2)434/19-20

(These minutes have been seen  
by the Administration)

Ref : CB2/PL/FE

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

#### **Minutes of meeting**

**held on Tuesday, 12 November 2019, at 2:30 pm  
in Conference Room 3 of the Legislative Council Complex**

**Members present** : Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, GBS, JP (Chairman)  
Dr Hon Helena WONG Pik-wan (Deputy Chairman)  
Prof Hon Joseph LEE Kok-long, SBS, JP  
Dr Hon Priscilla LEUNG Mei-fun, SBS, JP  
Hon Claudia MO  
Hon Steven HO Chun-yin, BBS  
Hon CHAN Chi-chuen  
Dr Hon KWOK Ka-ki  
Hon KWOK Wai-keung, JP  
Hon Elizabeth QUAT, BBS, JP  
Dr Hon CHIANG Lai-wan, SBS, JP  
Hon Andrew WAN Siu-kin  
Hon CHU Hoi-dick  
Hon HO Kai-ming  
Hon SHIU Ka-fai, JP  
Hon SHIU Ka-chun  
Hon Wilson OR Chong-shing, MH  
Hon YUNG Hoi-yan, JP  
Dr Hon Pierre CHAN  
Hon LAU Kwok-fan, MH  
Hon Kenneth LAU Ip-keung, BBS, MH, JP  
Hon AU Nok-hin  
Hon Vincent CHENG Wing-shun, MH, JP  
Hon Tony TSE Wai-chuen, BBS  
Hon CHAN Hoi-yan

**Members absent** : Ir Dr Hon LO Wai-kwok, SBS, MH, JP  
Hon HUI Chi-fung

**Public Officers : Item IV  
attending**

Dr CHUI Tak-yi, JP  
Under Secretary for Food and Health

Ms Chelsea WONG Wing-chee  
Principal Assistant Secretary for Food and Health (Food) 1

Dr Samuel YEUNG Tze-kiu  
Consultant (Community Medicine) (Risk Assessment and  
Communication), Centre for Food Safety  
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

Miss Janny MA Ka-ming  
Scientific Officer (Standard Setting) 3, Centre for Food Safety  
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

Dr YAO Zhongping  
Associate Professor, Department of Applied Biology and  
Chemical Technology  
The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

**Item V**

Dr CHUI Tak-yi, JP  
Under Secretary for Food and Health

Mr Amor WONG Yiu-tuen  
Principal Assistant Secretary for Food and Health (Food) 3

Dr Kenny HO Chin-ho  
Assistant Director (Inspection and Quarantine) (Acting)  
Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department

Dr Mary CHOW Ka-wai  
Senior Veterinary Officer (Animal Management) Development  
Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department

Mr Edward TSE Cheong-wo, JP  
Project Director 3  
Architectural Services Department

Mr Nevin LAM Yiu-hon  
Senior Project Manager 323  
Architectural Services Department

Item VI

Dr CHUI Tak-yi, JP  
Under Secretary for Food and Health

Mr Amor WONG Yiu-tuen  
Principal Assistant Secretary for Food and Health (Food) 3

Dr Kenny HO Chin-ho  
Assistant Director (Inspection and Quarantine) (Acting)  
Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department

Dr Edwin TSUI Lok-kin  
Assistant Director (Risk Management)  
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

**Clerk in attendance** : Miss Josephine SO  
Chief Council Secretary (2) 2

**Staff in attendance** : Ms Wendy LO  
Senior Council Secretary (2) 2

Mr Clement HAU  
Council Secretary (2) 2

Miss Cally LAI  
Legislative Assistant (2) 2

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**I. Confirmation of minutes**  
(LC Paper No. CB(2)110/19-20)

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 October 2019 were confirmed.

**II. Information paper issued since the last meeting**  
(LC Paper No. CB(2)41/19-20(01))

2. Members noted that since the last meeting, the Secretariat had issued a letter dated 21 October 2019 from Dr Hon KWOK Ka-ki regarding the impact of the Police's use of pepper sprays, tear sprays and tear gas rounds in dispersal operations on the environment and food safety.

### **III. Date of next meeting and items for discussion**

(LC Paper Nos. CB(2)153/19-20(01) and (02))

3. Members agreed to discuss the following items at the next regular meeting scheduled for Tuesday, 10 December 2019 at 2:30 pm:

- (a) Rodent control work; and
- (b) Creation of a permanent post of Senior Principal Executive Officer in the Food Branch of the Food and Health Bureau to deal with the increasingly complex food safety policy issues and new initiatives.

*(Post-meeting note: Members were informed vide LC Paper No. CB(2)266/19-20 issued on 20 November 2019 that the Chairman had acceded to the Administration's request to rephrase the title of the discussion item as referred to in paragraph 3(b) above as "Proposed making permanent of one supernumerary post of Senior Principal Executive Officer in the Food Branch of the Food and Health Bureau", in order to better reflect the nature of the discussion.)*

#### Items for discussion at future meetings

4. The Chairman informed members that he and the Deputy Chairman had met with the Secretary for Food and Health on 4 November 2019 to discuss the work plan of the Panel for the 2019-2020 legislative session. The Panel's list of outstanding items for discussion had been updated with some items added to/deleted from the list, so as to reflect members' suggestions made at the Panel meeting on 18 October 2019 and the discussion with the Administration at the said work plan meeting.

### **IV. Guidelines on the use of deep-frying oil for the trade**

(LC Paper Nos. CB(2)153/19-20(03) and (04))

5. At the invitation of the Chairman, Under Secretary for Food and Health ("USFH") briefed members on the background of commissioning the study on the use of frying oil ("the consultancy study") and the "Trade Guidelines on the Use of Deep-frying Oil" ("the Guidelines") formulated based on that study and published by the Centre for Food Safety ("CFS") of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department ("FEHD") in October 2019, details of which were set out in the Administration's paper (LC Paper No. CB(2)153/19-20(03)). Associate Professor, Department of Applied Biology and Chemical Technology of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University ("PolyU") gave a brief account of the methodologies adopted and the results of the study conducted.

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6. Members also noted the background brief on the subject prepared by Legislative Council ("LegCo") Secretariat (LC Paper No. CB(2)153/19-20(04)).

Safety of deep-frying oil and food fried with it

7. Expressing concern about the safety of food prepared by deep-frying oil, Mr Steven HO asked whether the Administration would take samples of deep-fried food from food premises for testing to ensure that such food was safe for human consumption. Ms YUNG Hoi-yan noted with deep concern that in a study conducted by the Consumer Council in 2017 covering the testing of 60 brands/types of cooking oil, contaminants and harmful substances (such as phthalates, 3-monochloropropane-1, 2-diol and genotoxic carcinogen glycidol) were detected in the majority of the oil samples. Taking into account the findings of the Consumer Council's study, she expressed worries about the health threat posed by food that had undergone the deep-frying process and questioned whether the Administration had under-estimated the food safety risk of using deep-frying oil.

8. In response, USFH and Consultant (Community Medicine) (Risk Assessment and Communication), CFS ("C(CM)(RAC)/CFS") made the following points:

- (a) to safeguard food safety, the Administration had been timely updating the food safety standards and regulatory arrangements. During the public consultation conducted in 2015 on regulation of edible fats and oils, the Administration proposed to regulate metallic contaminants and harmful substances in edible fats and oils through legislative amendments. The proposals involved amending two items of subsidiary legislation under the Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance (Cap. 132);
- (b) the Administration had completed part of the legislative work in October 2018 which amended the Food Adulteration (Metallic Contamination) Regulations (Cap. 132V) to stipulate maximum levels for arsenic and lead in food including edible fats and oils;
- (c) the Administration was now drafting a legislative proposal to update the Harmful Substances in Food Regulations (Cap. 132AF). Maximum levels for industrially-produced trans fats and mycotoxins (including aflatoxins in food such as edible fats and oils) as well as for harmful substances like erucic acid and benzo[a]pyrene in edible fats and oils would be proposed for enhanced protection of food safety; and

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- (d) CFS would continue to monitor the safety of edible fats and oils by taking samples for chemical testing under its regular Food Surveillance Programme ("FSP"). Under FSP, CFS took food samples at the import, wholesale and retail levels for testing.

9. The Deputy Chairman expressed concern that after repeated use, the level of harmful substances in deep-frying oil would increase, impacting on the quality of the oil. Noting that the Guidelines recommended that cooking oils should be disposed of when the value of total polar compounds ("TPC") in deep-frying oil was greater than 27%, she asked whether deep-frying oil with a TPC value above 27% was less safe to use. Ms YUNG Hoi-yan enquired whether the quality of deep-frying oil could be assessed through various quality indicators, such as measuring the TPC value of the oil.

10. USFH responded that chemical analyses on the levels of various substances (including TPC) in deep-frying oil could indicate the quality of the oil, but not necessarily reflect the safety of using the oil for cooking. To provide some guidelines on the good practice of using frying oils, CFS commissioned the PolyU Technology and Consultancy Company Limited ("Study Consultant") to conduct the consultancy study. The Study Consultant conducted experiments mimicking the process of deep-frying food by local food premises, followed by chemical analyses on levels of benzo[a]pyrene, erucic acid, acid value, TPC, etc. in deep-frying oil. Results of the experiments showed that benzo[a]pyrene and erucic acid levels in deep-frying oil did not increase with repeated use, while acid value and TPC of deep-frying oil steadily increased with the number of times the oil was used. The Guidelines prepared by the Study Consultant had put forward specific recommendations and indicators for assessing the quality of deep-frying oil (including colour, odour, smoke point, foaming, etc.) as well as the conditions under which the deep-frying oil should be changed.

11. The Chairman declared that he owned a company with business in recovering "waste cooking oils". He said that in recent years, the level of sulphur found in "waste cooking oils" was increasingly high. In his view, the Administration should study whether cooking oils with sulphur content posed any food safety risk. Echoing the view of the Chairman, the Deputy Chairman suggested that the Administration should introduce legislation to regulate the level of sulphur in food including cooking oils.

12. USFH responded that sulphur found in used cooking oils might come from sources other than the oils, e.g. it could be present in the food products. The Administration noted that in other countries/places, sulphur was not used as a quality indicator for reused oil or cooking oils in use. Associate Professor, Department of Applied Biology and Chemical Technology of PolyU supplemented that in the own experiments conducted by PolyU, varying levels of sulphur were found in the cooking oil samples. Since

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sulphur were detected in different types of cooking oils, the Guidelines did not recommend to use sulphur content as an indicator for assessing the quality of cooking oils.

13. Mr SHIU Ka-chun said that in recent months, the police had frequently fired tear gas rounds to disperse demonstrators, with some fired near food premises. He expressed grave concern about the impact of chemicals contained in tear gas rounds on the affected food premises, as the chemicals could contaminate the food therein, including cooking oils. He enquired whether the Guidelines would advise affected food premises to dispose of cooking oils if tear gas rounds were fired in the proximity of these food premises.

14. USFH responded that the Guidelines did not cover the scenario as mentioned by Mr SHIU Ka-chun, as they were formulated following the scope of the consultancy study commissioned by CFS in 2017 in response to the trade's request for provision of guidelines on the safe use of deep-frying oil for the trade's reference and adoption. Associate Professor, Department of Applied Biology and Chemical Technology of PolyU added that no experiments had been conducted in this study to examine whether cooking oils would be contaminated when tear gas rounds were fired near the food premises and had to be changed.

Trade's adoption of the Guidelines and the Administration's promotion work

15. The Chairman held the view that the Administration should provide the trade with straightforward and easy-to-apply recommendations, such as the number of times the oil could be reused before they had to be disposed of (especially if the oil was repeatedly heated up and cooled down) and the suitable temperature for cooking food during the deep-frying process.

16. Associate Professor, Department of Applied Biology and Chemical Technology of PolyU responded that complicated chemical reactions were involved in the deep-frying process. Since various factors could lead to oil deterioration (such as frying food with seasonings or with moisture on the food surface, using an excessively high temperature for deep-frying, and accumulation of residues in deep-frying oil), it might be difficult to provide the trade with recommendations on changing deep-frying oil solely based on the number of times the oil had been used. To slow down oil deterioration and ensure food safety, the trade should use deep-frying oil and utensils properly, in accordance with the recommendations set out in the Guidelines. Regarding the suitable temperature for cooking food with deep-frying oil, as prolonged heating or frequent heating up and cooling down would accelerate oil deterioration, the Guidelines recommended that during deep-frying, the oil temperature be controlled between 150°C and 180°C; and the temperature should be lowered to between 120°C and 130°C when the fryer was idle.

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17. The Deputy Chairman was concerned that since the Guidelines were not legally binding, it lacked incentive for local food premises to implement the recommendations therein contained. She enquired about the measures to be taken by the Administration to encourage and facilitate the trade's adoption of the recommendations in the Guidelines. Mr Steven HO was concerned about the operability of and the trade's receptiveness to those recommendations. He suggested that the Administration should regularly review the trade's adoption of the recommendations in the Guidelines. He further asked whether the Administration would consider introducing legislation in the future to regulate the use of deep-frying oil.

18. USFH responded with the following points:

- (a) during the public consultation in 2015 on the regulation of edible fats and oils, food traders had expressed views that reused oil or cooking oils in use should not be covered in the regulatory regime;
- (b) at present, there was no international consensus on the safety standards of reused oil or cooking oils in use, and no relevant standards had been established by the Codex Alimentarius Commission;
- (c) the Administration decided to provide the trade with the Guidelines for reference and adoption, instead of regulating the use of cooking oils through legislative means;
- (d) CFS would publicize the Guidelines widely to the trade, with a view to encouraging and facilitating the trade's adoption of the recommendations therein; and
- (e) CFS would review at suitable junctures the practice of using deep-frying oil by food premises, as well as the adoption and implementation of recommendations in the Guidelines by the trade.

19. C(CM)(RAC)/CFS and Associate Professor, Department of Applied Biology and Chemical Technology of PolyU added that the trade (including chefs, managers and operators of food premises) had been consulted extensively and individual food premises had been invited to try out the recommendations in the Guidelines. During the consultation process, over 100 traders were involved in assessing the operability of and the trade's receptiveness to the draft Guidelines. Around 80% of the traders responded generally agreed that the recommendations in the Guidelines could be applied to daily deep-frying operations or help improve the quality of deep-frying oil



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and deep-fried food. The Study Consultant had also suitably incorporated suggestions from traders into the Guidelines to better meet the operational needs of the trade.

**V. Construction of the Animal Management and Animal Welfare Building Complex in Kai Tak Development**  
(LC Paper Nos. CB(2)153/19-20(05) and (06))

20. At the invitation of the Chairman, USFH briefed members on the proposed construction of the Animal Management and Animal Welfare Building Complex ("AMAWBC") in Kai Tak Development ("KTD"), as set out in the Administration's paper (LC Paper No. CB(2)153/19-20(05)). Members noted the information note prepared by the LegCo Secretariat on the subject (LC Paper No. CB(2)153/19-20(06)).

Scope of the project

21. Dr CHIANG Lai-wan and Mr SHIU Ka-fai enquired about the permitted plot ratio of the site 3A1 in KTD for constructing AMAWBC and the estimated total floor area of the new building complex. Project Director 3, Architectural Services Department responded that the proposed site 3A1 was about 2 344 square metres ("m<sup>2</sup>") in size. A plot ratio of around eight could be achieved for the proposed project. The new building complex would have a total construction floor area of about 20 000 m<sup>2</sup>.

22. Mr SHIU Ka-fai enquired about the difference in size and services between the proposed AMAWBC and the existing Animal Management Centre in Kowloon ("AMC(K)") located in To Kwa Wan. Senior Veterinary Officer (Animal Management) Development, Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department responded that the proposed AMAWBC project comprised the construction of a new 15-storey complex for (a) re-provisioning of AMC(K) and (b) providing additional space and facilities to meet the operational needs of animal management, covering the provision of offices and facilities for the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department ("AFCD")'s Animal Management (Development) Division, Equine Disease Division, Veterinary Laboratory Division, Antimicrobial Resistance ("AMR") Surveillance Section and Avian Influenza Surveillance Section of the Animal Health Division, the Secretariat of the Veterinary Surgeons Board of Hong Kong ("VSB") and other related ancillary facilities. The net operating floor area for provision of facilities in relation to animal management in AMAWBC was about 4 778 m<sup>2</sup>. It was about 3 551 m<sup>2</sup> more than the size of the area for providing similar services in AMC(K). Compared with AMC(K), the number of animal keeping facilities to be provided in AMAWBC would increase from around 120 to around 270.

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Facilities and services to be provided in the new building complex

23. The Deputy Chairman said that she was not opposed to the proposed construction of AMAWBC. She noted that AFCD would be able to receive more stray animals or animals surrendered by owners, as more animal keeping facilities would be provided in the new building complex. She enquired about the existing policy in respect of stray animal management and whether AFCD had any concrete plans to promote adoption of animals kept in AMCs.

24. Assistant Director (Inspection and Quarantine) (Acting)/AFCD ("AD(IQ)(Atg)/AFCD") responded that stray animals caught would be put in AMCs for observation. For those with a microchip implanted, AMCs would try to locate their owners based on the information in the microchip. In general, these animals would stay in AMCs for about 10 to 20 days. AMCs would keep the non-microchipped dogs for at least four days, allowing time for their owners to reclaim them. If the animals left unclaimed were in good health and assessed by a veterinary officer as having a gentle temperament and suitable for adoption, AFCD would arrange their transfer to animal welfare organizations ("AWOs") for adoption by members of the public as far as possible. The new building complex would provide more than double the current number of animal keeping facilities for dogs, cats and other small animals. Dedicated facilities for publicity and public education would also be available in the building complex for AFCD to organize classes, seminars and programmes to promote responsible pet ownership and animal rehoming.

25. The Deputy Chairman and Mr CHAN Chi-chuen asked whether AFCD would consider extending the housing period of non-microchipped animals to more than four days if they were kept in AMAWBC. Mr CHU Hoi-dick said that in recent years, there had been a decrease in the number of stray animals euthanized by AFCD. He wondered whether the need for euthanasia could be further reduced if more animals could be kept in AMAWBC for a longer time awaiting adoption.

26. AD(IQ)(Atg)/AFCD responded that it was a statutory requirement to keep non-microchipped stray dogs in AMCs for at least four days to allow time for their owners to reclaim them. If circumstances permitted, non-microchipped animals would be allowed to be kept in AMAWBC and other AMCs for more than four days, so as to increase their chance of being adopted and reduce the number of stray animals that needed to be euthanized.

27. Mr CHAN Chi-chuen said that there had been media reports that a number of AWOs had accused AMCs of being unhygienic, negligent and inhumane in treating animals, resulting in animals in the centres being vulnerable to injuries, illnesses and even death. He asked whether any new arrangements would be adopted to better manage the facilities in AMAWBC

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and whether visits could be arranged for the public to understand how animals were treated in the new building complex. Mr CHAN anticipated that more animals would be surrendered to AFCD by owners after the Administration's introduction of a "positive duty of care" on animal keepers. He asked whether the Administration had, in planning for the animal keeping facilities in AMAWBC, taken into account the possible increase in the number of animal abandonment cases.

28. In response, AD(IQ)(Atg)/AFCD advised that a number of new and improved facilities would be provided in AMAWBC, including a detention room, isolation facilities for infectious or debilitated animals, a surgical room and a recovery room for injured animals after surgical treatment. These facilities would help improve the overall health conditions of the animals kept in the new building complex. Moreover, the animal keeping and caring facilities in the new building complex would be divided into zones to cater for animals of different sizes and needs. AFCD would work with AWOs to arrange visits for members of the public to understand the rehoming service currently adopted by AFCD. AD(IQ)(Atg)/AFCD further said that while the animal keeping facilities in AMAWBC would mainly serve the Kowloon Peninsula and the Sai Kung district, the facilities and resources in the building complex would be flexibly deployed for the purpose of enhancing the overall animal welfare in Hong Kong.

29. Ms Elizabeth QUAT expressed disappointment that only 270 animal keeping facilities would be provided in the new building complex. In her view, the Administration should ensure that AMAWBC would be put to optimal use to meet the needs of animal management. She suggested that AFCD should review the design of the new complex to make room for construction of additional animal keeping facilities and other facilities in relation to animal welfare and animal management.

30. In response, AD(IQ)(Atg)/AFCD explained that the 270 animal keeping facilities included quarantine facilities for imported dogs and cats, facilities for keeping and caring of animals caught or received by AFCD (including small animals such as rabbits and hamsters) and facilities for animals awaiting rehoming. Compared with the existing AMC(K), the keeping facilities for small animals (about 30) were new services and the number of quarantine facilities for imported animals had also increased from 10 to 20 for dogs, and six to 20 for cats. AFCD would partner with AWOs with a view to maximizing the usage of rehoming facilities for animals awaiting adoption. It should be noted that the animal keeping facilities in AMAWBC were intended for accommodating animals requiring temporary keeping rather than for keeping animals for an indefinite period of time. AFCD would continue to collaborate with AWOs to promote animal rehoming and provide subvention to AWOs for this area of work.

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31. Dr CHIANG Lai-wan said that it was her observation that the number of stray dogs and cats caught in the city area had been declining in recent years. In her view, all stray animals caught or received by AFCD could be kept in the AMC located in Sheung Shui, New Territories where a number of animal keeping facilities were unoccupied. The Administration should consider channelling/redeploying the resources saved to other areas of services demanded by pet owners (e.g. provision of spay and neuter services for animals) in the new building complex to optimize its use.

32. Mr SHIU Ka-chun said that at present, only the CityU Veterinary Medical Centre provided 24/7 (i.e. 24-hour-7-day) animal emergency services with the biggest veterinary specialist team in Hong Kong. Most pet owners relied on the services provided by about 140 private veterinary clinics when their pets got sick. However, according to a consultancy study on the development of the veterinary profession in Hong Kong commissioned by VSB in 2016, of the households which had ever brought pets to see veterinary surgeons, 47.5% considered that the fees and charges of veterinary services in Hong Kong "very/quite unreasonable". Mr SHIU asked whether the Administration would consider establishing a public animal clinic/hospital in AMAWBC, so as to provide pet owners with an option other than private veterinary clinics. Mr CHAN Chi-chuen and Dr CHIANG Lai-wan made similar enquiries, adding that the provision of public veterinary services could alleviate the financial burden of pet owners.

33. USFH and AD(IQ)(Atg)/AFCD responded that as there were currently sufficient private veterinary clinics (some were run by AWOs) in Hong Kong offering various veterinary services and AFCD had been providing subventions to AWOs on their work on safeguarding animal welfare (including the provision of veterinary services in relation to animal rehoming), the Administration had no plan to establish a public animal clinic/hospital in AMAWBC.

34. In response to Mr SHIU Ka-fai's enquiry, AD(IQ)(Atg)/AFCD said that AFCD's Tai Lung Veterinary Laboratory ("TLVL") was the only government veterinary laboratory responsible for diagnostic testing of animal diseases and chemical residual testing to safeguard public and animal health in Hong Kong. At present, there was no spare capacity at TLVL for AMR tests in relation to local food animals and equine disease tests. AMAWBC would help relieve the shortage of space in this regard by providing new laboratory facilities for the Equine Disease Division to conduct equine disease tests. This would facilitate the frequent horse movement between Hong Kong and Conghua. The Chairman said that while he was not opposed to the provision of new laboratory facilities in AMAWBC, he considered that the conduct of equine disease tests should be taken up by the Hong Kong Jockey Club.

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35. Mr CHU Hoi-dick expressed concern about the provision of animal keeping facilities in the community. He asked whether any AWOs had ever applied for the use of vacant government sites under the Development Bureau's "Funding Scheme to Support the Use of Vacant Government Sites by Non-government Organizations" for setting up support centres for animals in the community. AD(IQ)(Atg)/AFCD said that to his understanding, two AWOs had participated in the funding scheme.

36. Mr SHIU Ka-fai said that Members belonging to the Liberal Party were supportive of the proposed construction of AMAWBC in KTD. Mr CHAN Chi-chuen and Mr SHIU Ka-chun also indicated support for the proposed works project.

37. Mr Steven HO and Ms Elizabeth QUAT said that Members belonging to the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment of Hong Kong had reservation about the project. They requested the Administration to provide more detailed information about the works project for members' reference.

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38. To facilitate members' consideration of the proposed works project, the Administration was requested to provide the Panel and in its paper to be submitted to the Public Works Subcommittee, the following information in writing:

- (a) the respective numbers and types of complaints received and handled in 2018 by each of the four existing AMCs;
- (b) whether the Administration would consider (i) providing spay and neuter services for animals kept in AMAWBC and (ii) establishing a public animal clinic/hospital in the new building complex, so as to provide pet owners with an option other than private veterinary clinics; and, if the answers to these questions were in the negative, the issues considered by the Administration in coming up with its decisions;
- (c) detailed information on the area size of various facilities to be provided in AMAWBC in relation to animal welfare and animal management; and how well they were improved as compared with those in the existing AMC(K);
- (d) floor plan and cross-section plan of AMAWBC, showing the proposed use of the space to be provided therein; and
- (e) whether any AWOs had ever applied for the use of vacant government sites under the Development Bureau's "Funding Scheme to Support the Use of Vacant Government Sites by Non-government Organizations" for setting up support centres

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for animals in the community and if yes, details of the plan(s) (including the scale of the project(s) and the number(s) of animal keeping facilities provided in the animal centre(s)).

**VI. Latest progress on the work in response to African Swine Fever**  
(LC Paper Nos. CB(2)153/19-20(07) to (09) and CB(2)119/19-20(01))

39. At the invitation of the Chairman, USFH briefed members on the latest progress of the Administration's work in response to African Swine Fever ("ASF"), as set out in the Administration's paper (LC Paper No. CB(2)153/19-20(07)). Members noted the background brief prepared by the LegCo Secretariat on the subject (LC Paper No. CB(2)153/19-20(08)).

Supply of live pigs from the Mainland

40. The Chairman, Mr Steven HO, Mr SHIU Ka-fai, Ms Elizabeth QUAT, Mr Wilson OR, Mr Vincent CHENG and Ms CHAN Hoi-yan expressed grave concern about the magnitude of the upsurge in the retail price of fresh pork due to the reduced supply of live pigs from the Mainland (the average daily supply of live pigs from the Mainland had, since June 2019, dropped significantly from about 4 000 heads to about 1 500 heads in recent months), as it had greatly affected people's livelihood. They enquired about the measures adopted/to be adopted by the Administration to increase the supply of Mainland live pigs so as to help stabilize the price of fresh pork.

41. USFH made the following responses:

- (a) while the Mainland authorities had strived to maintain supply of live pigs to Hong Kong, the overall production and supply of live pigs on the Mainland had also been greatly affected by the outbreaks of ASF. As estimated earlier by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, the supply of pork in the second half of 2019 would be further tightened. In this regard, the Mainland authorities had launched a series of measures to increase pig production with a view to resuming steady supply of live pigs. However, as breeding took time, it was estimated that the supply would remain tight for a period of time;
- (b) the Administration noticed that there were some adjustments in the market in view of the decline in supply of live pigs. As an alternative to fresh pork, the volume of chilled pork imported from the Mainland had increased since May 2019 and had once surged to some 24 000 kilograms per day, which was 60% higher than the level before May 2019 standing at 15 000 kilograms per day; and

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- (c) the Administration was highly concerned about the low level of live pig supply and the substantial increase in price, and had relayed to the Mainland authorities concerned the wish of the trade and the public for increasing the supply of live pigs. The Administration would continue to monitor the development of ASF outbreaks and maintain close liaison with the Mainland authorities on increasing the supply of live pigs to Hong Kong.

42. The Chairman, Mr SHIU Ka-fai and Ms CHAN Hoi-yan said that although the volume of chilled and frozen pork supplied in the market had increased, most local residents still preferred fresh pork to chilled/frozen pork due to dietary habits. They considered that the Administration should step up liaison with the relevant Mainland authorities and try their best to bring the supply of live pigs to Hong Kong back to its previous level. Mr Steven HO hoped that the supply of Mainland live pigs could reach a higher level at least at around 2 000 to 3 000 pigs per day.

43. Ms CHAN Hoi-yan asked about the respective numbers of registered Mainland pig farms that (a) were affected by ASF and had ceased exporting live pigs to Hong Kong and (b) were currently supplying live pigs to Hong Kong. Ms CHAN also asked whether FEHD would conduct inspections on those pig farms that had been affected by ASF to assess when the farms could resume supply of live pigs to Hong Kong and whether the Administration had any projection of the daily supply of Mainland live pigs in the coming three months.

44. Assistant Director (Risk Management)/FEHD ("AD(RM)/FEHD") responded that the list of registered Mainland pig farms was provided by the General Administration of Customs of the People's Republic of China. The list was subject to change, as determined by factors such as commercial considerations and the rearing conditions of the registered farms. In 2018, there were about 180 registered pig farms on the said list. The latest number was 123. The Administration understood that the production and supply of live pigs on the Mainland had been affected by the outbreaks of ASF, leading to an excess demand for live pigs for local consumption and the continuous increase in price on the Mainland. These had also affected the supply of live pigs to Hong Kong. Currently, there were about 30 registered pig farms actively supplying live pigs to Hong Kong. AD(RM)/FEHD further said that the operation of farms outside Hong Kong was regulated by the respective local authorities. The Administration noted that inspections to the registered Mainland pig farms were undertaken by the relevant Mainland authorities.

Relief and support measures for the trade

45. Mr Steven HO, Mr SHIU Ka-fai, Ms Elizabeth QUAT and Ms CHAN Hoi-yan expressed concern that the low supply of live pigs and upsurge in retail price of fresh pork had greatly affected the business and operation of industries related to live pigs. They asked whether the Administration would consider introducing more proactive measures to safeguard market supply and ease the financial pressure on related industries.

46. USFH responded that the Administration noted the impact of the low supply of live pigs and upsurge in price on the public and the trade. The Government had announced in August 2019 a series of helping measures for enterprises and residents, and some of these measures could ease the financial pressure on industries affected by ASF and the supply of live pigs. These measures included reducing rental by half for six months for stalls in public markets of FEHD, and waiving the licence fee for fresh provision shops, slaughterhouses and pig farms for a year.

47. Mr Steven HO and Mr SHIU Ka-fai opined that the rental reduction for all public market stalls was only a short-term measure aiming to tackle the possible economic downturn caused by the recent social disturbances. The Chairman, Mr HO, Ms Elizabeth QUAT, Mr SHIU and Ms CHAN Hoi-yan held the view that as the business of most fresh meat stalls had, since the outbreaks of ASF, been badly hit, the Administration should introduce targeted measures to alleviate the impact of ASF on the trade, including fresh meat stalls.

48. Mr Steven HO, Ms Elizabeth QUAT, Mr Wilson OR and Mr Vincent CHENG suggested that to assist the owners and operators to tide over the financial hardship, the Administration should consider extending the rental reduction period for meat stalls in public markets or waiving the rent of meat stalls. Ms CHAN Hoi-yan asked whether the Administration would consider providing subsidies for fresh meat stalls. Mr OR said that to his understanding, Link Real Estate Investment Trust did not roll out any initiatives to alleviate the financial burden of meat stalls operating in its fresh markets. He hoped that the Administration would consider introducing additional relief measures that could benefit all meat stall owners/operators. USFH responded that the Administration would monitor the effectiveness of the helping measures and review whether further initiatives should be introduced taking into account the market situation.

49. Mr Steven HO and Mr Wilson OR called on the Administration to introduce support measures to facilitate the development of the local pig rearing industry with a view to promoting local production and safeguarding market supply. Mr HO suggested that the Administration should consider: (a) providing support for local pig farmers in the form of subsidies and



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subsidized interest for loans; (b) exploring the provision of additional sites for pig rearing and implementing measures to facilitate the relocation of pig farms; and (c) exploring with the trade the feasibility of importing live pigs from other places and following up with relevant stakeholders on the import requirements and quarantine procedures. Mr OR also considered that the Administration should provide assistance to local pig farms to increase local supply and proactively follow up with the trade on the exploration of other sources of live pig supply.

50. In response, USFH advised that the total maximum rearing capacity of licensed pig farms was about 74 000 heads. At present, the local pig farms were rearing a total of about 61 000 heads of pigs, meaning that there was room for some pig farms to increase their production/supply. In regard to the recent proposal from the trade for importing live pigs from other places, the Administration was willing to explore the feasibility with the trade and stakeholders and to coordinate accordingly.

51. The Chairman expressed concern that the supply of imported livestock including pigs, cattle and goats was monopolized by a few import and distributing agents. In his view, the Administration should consider increasing market competition, by allowing wholesalers/buyers to purchase livestock direct from Mainland registered farms for sale in the Hong Kong market. To maintain stable market supply, the Administration should also consider relaxing the control on the rearing capacity of local pig and chicken farms and follow up with the relevant Mainland authorities on issues relating to the supply of live pigs, live poultry and hairy crabs from the Mainland.

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52. The Administration was requested to provide a written response to the following issues raised by members:

- (a) whether the Administration would consider devising long-term plans/measures to ease the financial pressure on industries affected by ASF and the reduced supply of Mainland live pigs (e.g. extending the rental reduction period for meat stalls in public markets);
- (b) whether any enhanced measures would be taken to support the local pig rearing industry (e.g. lifting the existing control on the licensed rearing capacity of local pig farms and providing subsidies to farmers); and
- (c) whether and how the Administration would explore different importing sources to increase the supply of pork and stabilize the retail price.

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**VII. Any other business**

53. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 4:26 pm.

Council Business Division 2  
Legislative Council Secretariat  
20 December 2019