

# **立法會**

## ***Legislative Council***

LC Paper No. CB(2)153/19-20(08)

Ref : CB2/PL/FE

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

#### **Background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat for the meeting on 12 November 2019**

#### **Administration's follow-up work in response to African Swine Fever**

#### **Purpose**

This paper provides background information on the Administration's follow-up work in response to African Swine Fever ("ASF"), and summarizes major views and concerns of members of the Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene ("the Panel") on the subject.

#### **Background**

##### Supply of live pigs in Hong Kong

2. Hong Kong has long relied on import of foods including live pigs. According to information provided by the Administration in June 2019, over 90% of live pigs consumed in Hong Kong are supplied from registered pig farms on the Mainland supplying live pigs to Hong Kong ("registered farms"). In 2018, a total of 1.47 million live pigs were imported from the Mainland (averaging around 4 000 heads per day) and some 100 000 live pigs were supplied by the 43 Hong Kong's local pig farms (averaging around 290 heads per day).

##### Outbreaks of ASF on the Mainland

3. ASF is a highly contagious and viral disease in pigs, which can cause massive infection and death in pigs within a very short period of time. At present, there is neither vaccine nor medication available for preventing or treating ASF. Spreading of the disease is complex and diverse, since there are various means of transmission. In August 2018, ASF was first found on the

Mainland; and during the subsequent five months, there were ASF outbreaks in 23 Mainland provinces and municipalities.

#### Administration's preventive and control measures in response to ASF

4. According to the Administration, since the first ASF case on the Mainland in August 2018, the Centre for Food Safety and the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department ("AFCD") have been closely monitoring the situation, heightening vigilance and implementing corresponding measures to prevent ASF from infecting Hong Kong and impacting the local pig rearing sector. The measures include:

- (a) enhance the biosecurity work in various areas, including local pig farms, boundary checkpoints and slaughterhouses;
- (b) enhance the cleansing and disinfection in different areas of live pig supply (including strictly control the access of vehicles and personnel entering and leaving local pig farms, the slaughterhouses as well as the slaughter lines and lairages);
- (c) inspect the health certificates of all live pig consignments from the Mainland and monitor the health status of live pigs at the boundary checkpoints;
- (d) all imported and local pigs have to undergo ante-mortem and post-mortem inspections in slaughterhouses before supplying to the market;
- (e) step up the surveillance of live pigs supplied to the market; and
- (f) if suspected symptoms are detected in pigs, samples will be taken and immediately sent to AFCD's laboratory for rapid tests.

#### ASF cases detected in Hong Kong and enhanced preventive measures

5. On 10 and 31 May 2019, AFCD confirmed two separate incidents of pig samples collected in Sheung Shui Slaughterhouse ("SSSH") detected to have infected with ASF virus. The Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation declared SSSH as an infected place under the Public Health (Animals and Birds) Regulations (Cap. 139A) in order to prevent the virus from spreading out from SSSH. A total of 10 675 heads of pigs in SSSH were culled on the two occasions. Following each of the two incidents, the operation of SSSH was suspended for about one week until the completion of thorough cleansing and disinfection.<sup>1</sup> As the culling operations did cause

---

<sup>1</sup> SSSH resumed operation on 19 May and 6 June 2019 respectively on the two occasions.

direct financial loss to the concerned pig owners, the Administration has proposed to provide these owners with statutory compensation and ex-gratia payments for the pigs culled.<sup>2</sup>

6. In the light of ASF cases in Hong Kong, the Administration has further strengthened its preventive measures against ASF.<sup>3</sup> Among other measures, the Administration has reached an agreement with the trade to implement, starting from 6 June 2019, the "daily clearance arrangement" in the two slaughterhouses in Sheung Shui and Tsuen Wan (i.e. all live pigs entering the slaughterhouses are to be slaughtered within 24 hours). Under the new arrangement, lairages in different locations in the slaughterhouses are cleared for thorough cleansing and disinfection on a daily basis, thereby minimizing the chance for pigs to get infected in the slaughterhouses.

### **Members' concerns**

7. Members' major views and concerns over the subject are summarized below.

#### Administration's follow-up work

##### *Preventive and control measures against ASF*

8. Members appreciated the Administration's efforts in enhancing the preventive and control measures against ASF, with a view to forestalling further outbreaks of ASF in Hong Kong. Some members urged the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department ("FEHD") to strengthen the surveillance and inspection of Mainland live pigs supplied to Hong Kong right upon their arrival at the boundary control points, in order to prevent the spread of ASF to local pig farms and recurrence of ASF incidents in slaughterhouses.

9. According to the Administration, ASF virus demonstrated extremely high potential for trans-border spread. Despite the Government's efforts to guard against ASF, there might still be further infection cases. That said, to prevent ASF, control and surveillance at source were of utmost importance. It was

---

<sup>2</sup> At the Panel meeting on 11 June 2019, the Administration consulted members on the proposal to create a financial commitment of \$333 million to provide for the funding for the statutory compensation and ex-gratia payments for the culling operations conducted and to prepare for future culling operation(s) in the event that pigs in local farms have to be culled due to infection of ASF. Members generally supported the proposal. The Administration subsequently submitted the funding proposal (FCR(2019-20)34 refers) to the Finance Committee ("FC") in June 2019. As of today, the proposal is pending consideration by FC.

<sup>3</sup> Further strengthening measures are set out in paragraphs 13 to 19 of the paper provided by the Administration for the Panel meeting of 11 June 2019 (LC Paper No. CB(2)1594/18-19(07)).

noteworthy that the General Administration of Customs of the People's Republic of China ("GACC") had been exercising stringent inspection and quarantine on Mainland live pigs supplied to Hong Kong. Among other measures, GACC required that all live pigs must come from registered farms and be segregated for 15 days to ensure that the pigs were free of ASF symptoms before they were released from the farms. Pigs showing abnormality at any stage would not be exported to Hong Kong. Monitoring and inspection would be conducted at all checkpoints during transportation as well as in and out of the Qingshuihe transfer house located in Shenzhen. In parallel, FEHD would closely monitor the health conditions of live pigs entering Hong Kong and ensure that all Mainland live pigs arriving at Man Kam To Control Point were accompanied by valid health certificates issued by the Mainland Customs. AFCD would immediately carry out test on pigs with ASF symptoms.

10. The Administration further advised that the relevant Mainland authorities would immediately inform the Hong Kong Government if ASF was detected in any Mainland registered pig farms. As at June 2019, there had been no detection of ASF in any of the registered farms.

#### *Compensation and ex-gratia payments*

11. Regarding the Administration's proposal to provide compensation and ex-gratia payments for pig owners affected by the culling operations, some members suggested that the Administration should consider extending the compensation to cover other stakeholders in the supply chain of live pigs/fresh pork, e.g. fresh meat retailers and butchers, since they also suffered from financial loss as a result of the suspension of supply of live pigs. Consideration could be given to: (a) reducing or waiving the rent of meat stalls selling fresh pork/meat in public markets to assist the meat stall owners/operators to tide over the financial hardship; or/and (b) reducing or waiving the relevant licence fee for fresh provision shops or market stalls selling fresh meat.

12. The Administration responded that as the culling operations had caused direct financial loss to the concerned pig owners (i.e. people owning the pigs before the culling operations, who were usually live pig buyers or local farm owners), provision of statutory compensation and ex-gratia payments was proposed for the pigs culled in the operations. While the Administration had no plan at the present stage to extend the compensation to cover other stakeholders in the supply chain of live pigs/fresh pork, it would continue to listen to the trade's views and monitor the market situation.

### Slaughterhouse operation

13. There was a suggestion that the Administration should consider segregating live pigs raised at local pig farms from those imported from the Mainland and sending live pigs of different sources to different slaughterhouses for slaughtering (e.g. slaughtering local pigs at Tsuen Wan Slaughterhouse and imported pigs at SSSH). In members' views, the segregation arrangement could help prevent cross infection if live pigs imported from the Mainland were infected with ASF and, in case of ASF outbreaks in Hong Kong, help prevent a total suspension of the two local slaughterhouses and ensure a basic supply of live pigs for consumption by the public in Hong Kong.

14. The Administration advised that the operators of the slaughterhouses, due to their own commercial considerations (such as the differences in slaughtering capacities of the two slaughterhouses and delivery arrangements for pork/pork products etc.) had reservations about the segregation arrangement. The Administration emphasized that while segregation of pigs for slaughtering was one of the possible options worth exploring, the Mainland authorities had all along been exercising proper management and control at source.

### Supply of Mainland live pigs and price of fresh pork

15. Many members expressed grave concern that after the two ASF cases occurred in SSSH, the average daily supply of live pigs from the Mainland had, since June 2019, dropped significantly from about 4 000 heads to around 1 000 heads. Some members pointed out that the average retail price of fresh pork had surged noticeably (from about \$30 to \$40 per catty to \$100 per catty) as a result of a reduced supply of Mainland live pigs. An enquiry was raised about the measures taken by the Administration to maintain an adequate supply of Mainland live pigs to help stabilize the price of fresh pork. In members' view, the Administration should proactively liaise with the Mainland authorities on this matter and set a timeline on the full resumption of supply of Mainland live pigs to Hong Kong.

16. According to the Administration, it noticed that the supply of Mainland live pigs had decreased after SSSH's resumption of operation on 6 June 2019. Due to the outbreaks of ASF and a reduction of supply, the wholesale and retail prices of fresh pork had gone up considerably in Hong Kong and also on the Mainland. The Administration hoped that the supply of Mainland live pigs would increase gradually and return to the normal level. Before that happened, there might be fluctuations in the wholesale and retail prices of fresh pork. The Administration assured members that it would keep a close liaison with GACC, to see how to maintain a steady supply of live pigs. However, it was difficult for the Administration to set a timeline on the full resumption of supply of Mainland live pigs.

17. Some members pointed out that in recent years, the wholesale and retail prices of fresh pork had been on the rise on the Mainland. This would provide less incentive for Mainland pig farmers to continue to supply live pigs to Hong Kong. These members suggested that the Administration should (a) discuss with the trade whether a higher purchase price should be offered to Mainland registered pig farms to secure a stable supply of live pigs to Hong Kong; (b) provide more assistance and support to the local pig rearing sector in a bid to increase the number of locally-reared pigs; and (c) explore with the Mainland authorities the feasibility of increasing the number of pig farms eligible for supplying live pigs to Hong Kong.

18. According to the Administration, it noted that Mainland pig farmers, out of business considerations, might be less willing to export live pigs to Hong Kong. The Administration believed that the implementation of the "daily clearance arrangement" in the two slaughterhouses in Sheung Shui and Tsuen Wan would help minimize the risk of ASF infection in the slaughterhouses. The Administration would keep the Mainland authorities informed of the implementation progress of the "daily clearance arrangement" and the enhanced measures against ASF in various areas, in the hope that importation of Mainland live pigs would resume normal.

19. Some members held the view that the Administration should consider a total suspension of the importation of live pigs from the Mainland in view of the escalating ASF risk there. Some other members, however, expressed opposition to such a proposal, worrying that it might be difficult to resume the supply of live pigs in the future.

20. The Administration advised that according to its understanding, if any pigs in a registered pig farm on the Mainland were found to have infected with ASF, all pigs in that farm would be culled. The culling arrangements adopted by the Mainland authorities were generally in line with AFCD's. The movement of pigs of other farms within three kilometres of the infected farm would also be suspended and prohibited. For the sake of prevention and control of the disease, supply of live pigs from Mainland registered pig farms which were infected with ASF or located within or close to the infected areas would be suspended.

## **Recent developments**

21. On 3 September 2019, AFCD confirmed that ASF virus was detected in the samples from SSSH of three pigs from a Mainland registered pig farm. This was the third ASF case in Hong Kong. The infected pigs were found dead prior to slaughtering and did not enter the market. According to a press

release issued by the Administration on the same day, as the two local slaughterhouses have already implemented the "daily clearance arrangement", the closure of the relevant slaughterhouse and mass culling of other pigs were considered not necessary. Other pigs were slaughtered as usual and supplied to market for consumption.

22. At the Panel meeting of 18 October 2019, members considered it necessary for the Administration to report on its latest follow-up work in response to ASF. At the request of the Panel, the Administration will give a briefing on the work progress at the meeting on 12 November 2019.

### **Relevant papers**

23. A list of relevant papers on the Legislative Council website is in **Appendix**.

Council Business Division 2  
Legislative Council Secretariat  
6 November 2019

**Relevant papers on Administration's follow-up work  
in response to African Swine Fever**

<b>Committee</b>	<b>Date of meeting</b>	<b>Paper</b>
Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene	8.1.2019 (Item VI)	<u>Agenda</u> <u>Minutes</u>
Legislative Council	29.5.2019	<u>Official Record of Proceedings</u> <u>Pages 10769 to 10771 (Written</u> <u>question raised by Hon SHIU Ka-fai</u> <u>on "Incidents of pigs in</u> <u>slaughterhouses infected with</u> <u>infectious diseases")</u>
Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene	11.6.2019 (Item V)	<u>Agenda</u> <u>Minutes</u>
Legislative Council	30.10.2019	<u>Oral question raised by</u> <u>Hon Wilson OR on "Supply of live</u> <u>pigs"</u>

Council Business Division 2  
Legislative Council Secretariat  
6 November 2019