



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

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18 January 2021

Ms Maisie LAM  
Clerk to Subcommittee  
Council Business Division  
Legislative Council Secretariat  
Legislative Council Complex  
1 Legislative Council Road  
Central, Hong Kong

Dear Ms LAM,

**Reply to Legislative Council Subcommittee on Subsidiary Legislation**  
**Relating to the Prevention and Control of Disease**

Thank you for your letter of 12 January 2021 seeking further information on the issues discussed at the meeting on the same date. Our reply in respect of COVID-19 vaccines is set out below.

2. According to the World Health Organization (WHO) and health experts, COVID-19 will not come under control without effective treatment and vaccines. The Government made an announcement earlier in September 2020 that it would adopt a “two-pronged” strategy to procure vaccines for protecting against COVID-19 for the entire Hong Kong population. The Government has joined the COVAX Facility led by the WHO, and at the same time directly entered into advance purchase agreements (APAs) with individual vaccine developers to secure more supplies of vaccines at an earlier time.

3. As far as APAs are concerned, it is imperative that we have the best possible plan to secure sufficient supplies of vaccines for the entire Hong Kong population. Having considered that not all candidate vaccines can be successfully developed and launched into the market, the Government has set an initial goal to procure at least two candidate vaccines developed by different developers using different technology platforms, and to secure sufficient doses to cater for at least two times the entire population. As global competition for the vaccines is fierce, supply will be tight in the initial stage. The purpose of negotiating and entering into APAs is to reserve candidate vaccines which are more likely to be successful for the Hong Kong population at an earlier time, notwithstanding that the vaccines are still in development stage and have yet to obtain approval from relevant regulatory authorities.

4. As announced earlier by the Government, preliminary agreements have been reached with three vaccine developers, namely Sinovac Biotech (Hong Kong) Limited, Fosun Pharma and BioNtech, and AstraZeneca, to procure vaccines sufficient for 1.5 times the Hong Kong population. If the Government's strategy of negotiating and entering into APAs bears fruit and all vaccines reserved under the APAs are successfully developed, the quantity procured will far exceed that required by the entire population. This is an inevitable price to pay for ensuring an adequate supply of vaccines for Hong Kong people at an earlier time. And the essence of APAs is that the Government is obliged to procure an agreed quantity which is not to be reduced by a shortfall in demand. If the Government had adopted a conservative procurement strategy at the beginning, it would be most likely that the quantity of vaccines supplied would be insufficient to cater for the Hong Kong population. Hence, surplus supply is a possible outcome of the procurement strategy.

5. The Government's goal is to provide vaccination for the majority of the population within 2021 through a Government-led vaccination programme under which members of the public may receive free vaccination on a voluntary basis. We are working out the details of the vaccination programme, but have yet to confirm when the vaccines will be available and the groups of people to be vaccinated. Furthermore, notwithstanding that stringent clinical tests have been conducted to ascertain the safety of COVID-19 vaccines soon to be available in the market, the research and development period of the vaccines is greatly compressed as compared to other regular vaccines, and some of the vaccines are still undergoing phase 3 clinical trials. Therefore, we have no available information about the protection period of the vaccines (i.e. whether they confer lifelong immunity or require regular administration). At this stage, the Government's goal remains to procure vaccines developed by different developers

using different technology platforms, and to secure sufficient doses to cater for at least two times the entire population, so as to offer a choice of COVID-19 vaccines to members of the public.

6. In view of the above, we have not yet worked out how to handle surplus vaccines. The vaccination has not yet started in Hong Kong, public's response to the vaccines is unknown, and it remains unclear whether there is clinical evidence on the need for regular vaccination. As such, it is premature at this stage to discuss how to handle to surplus vaccines. We will continue with our efforts in dissemination of information, publicity and education. We will provide the public with accurate information on the vaccines and details on the vaccination programme through various channels, including print, electronic and social media, so that they can be better informed about the principles, formulation, efficacy and side effects of the various vaccines, thereby increasing their confidence in vaccination.

Yours sincerely,



(Ms Joan HUNG)  
for Secretary for Food and Health

c.c.

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