

(Translation)

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19 October 2021

Legislative Council Secretariat
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road
Central, Hong Kong
(Attn: Miss Josephine SO)

Dear Miss So,

**Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene
List of follow-up actions**

I refer to your letter dated 17 September 2021. Please find our response to the items “Promotion of sustainable fisheries development” and “Progress of the initiatives under the New Agriculture Policy” on the list of follow-up actions in the ensuing paragraphs.

Promotion of sustainable fisheries development

The Government has been supporting the local fisheries industry to move towards high value-added sustainable development through implementing a suite of measures, such as making good use of the \$500-million Sustainable Fisheries Development Fund (SFDF). In 2014, the number of local fishermen and aquaculturists engaged in capture and aquaculture fisheries were about 9 400 and 3 300 respectively; while in 2020, such numbers were about 10 100 and 3 300. AFCD does not maintain statistics on the income of local fishermen and aquaculturists.

To further promote aquaculture development and assist capture fishermen to switch to a more sustainable mode of operation, AFCD is making preparation for designating four new Fish Culture Zones at Wong Chuk Kok Hoi, Outer Tap Mun, Mirs Bay and Po Toi (Southeast) with a total area of some 590 hectares, aiming to encourage mariculturists to engage in sustainable aquaculture with advanced technologies. AFCD has commissioned a consultancy study to undertake the necessary statutory

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process which is estimated to be completed in 2022. AFCD has also set up a modern mariculture demonstration farm in Hong Kong in the end of last year to serve as a base for promoting modern mariculture technologies, so as to provide the industry with training and practice opportunities. Training workshops, seminars and on-farm practice will be conducted to help fisherman to adopt a more efficient culture method and improved culture technologies.

In light of the opportunities in the Greater Bay Area (GBA), AFCD is currently exploring measures to provide support to develop deep-sea mariculture in the GBA waters (such as funding support under SFDF) with a view to bringing new opportunities to local fishermen / aquaculturists to broaden their perspectives and capacity in a sustainable manner. SFDF has earlier given an in-principle funding approval of \$15 million to support Hong Kong fishermen to participate in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Mobile Fishermen Deep-sea Mariculture Industrial Park in Huizhou, Guangdong, encouraging Hong Kong mobile fishermen to switch to sustainable mariculture.

AFCD will maintain close contact with the trade to provide credit facilities under the Fisheries Development Loan Fund (FDLF) for potential projects, which are proved to be successful and beneficial to the trade. To facilitate timely and prompt provision of financial support under FDLF, AFCD will explore if there is scope for further streamlining the application and vetting procedures of FDLF.

As to the promotion of recreational fishing, AFCD has been facilitating the trade in exploring new opportunities for developing recreational fishing by funding relevant projects under SFDF. Two fishery-related eco-tour projects have been completed successfully with the funding support of SFDF, involving a total of some 110 fishermen and 5 400 members of the public. Another approved project aiming to promote the development of local pearl culture and related recreational fishing is also in progress. In addition, AFCD will launch a training scheme later this year tailor made for fishermen who are interested in operating a business in recreational fishing to build up their knowledge and capacity.

As long as marine fish culture activities within fish culture zones would not be adversely affected, and participants' safety safeguarded, licencees under the Marine Fish Culture Ordinance (Cap. 353) could apply to AFCD for a consent to conduct recreational fishing activities on licensed mariculture rafts under certain conditions. At present, 69 licencees are given consent to conduct recreational fishing activities on their rafts at 12

fish culture zones. The Government will promote the sustainable development of marine fish culture and recreational fishing through various measures mentioned above, and has no plan to amend the Cap. 353 or the licensing conditions.

Progress of the initiatives under the New Agriculture Policy

The Government commissioned a consultancy study on Agricultural Priority Areas (APAs) to identify relatively large areas of quality agricultural land, explore the feasibility of designating them as APAs, and recommend suitable policies and measures to provide incentives to encourage landowners to put fallow agricultural land into long-term agricultural use so as to support the development of local agriculture. As the study covers a significant amount of land, we have indicated at the Panel meeting in May 2021 that it would take at least two to three years (counting from mid-2021) to complete. When there is outcome of the consultancy study, the Government will carefully consider the outcome and recommendations, and decide the way forward as soon as possible.

For the construction cost of the Agricultural Park Phase 2, the estimate is not available at the moment given the detailed design is yet to finalise.

As to the farmers affected by Government development projects, they could be granted ex-gratia allowance in accordance with existing mechanism if they are assessed and confirmed to meet the eligibility criteria. The ex-gratia allowance includes the loss in revenue arising from land resumption and relevant costs. If livestock farmers need financial assistance for relocation of farms, they could apply for low-interest agricultural loans from AFCD for development purposes.

Yours sincerely,

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for Secretary of Food and Health