

**For discussion on
9 February 2021**

**Legislative Council
Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene**

Promotion of Sustainable Fisheries Development

Purpose

This paper aims to brief Members on the progress of the promotion of development of the sustainable fisheries industry through the implementation of the Sustainable Fisheries Development Fund (SFDF), and the conservation of fisheries resources in local waters.

SFDF

2. Established in 2014 with an approved commitment of \$500 million, SFDF aims to provide financial assistance for the fisheries industry to carry out projects which are conducive to sustainable development, thereby helping fisheries communities to adopt a modernised and high value-added mode of operation.

General applications under SFDF

3. As at the end of December 2020, a total of 44 general applications have been received, amongst which 18 of the applications have been approved, and 3 applications are being processed¹. The approved projects involve a total funding of about \$94 million, and the applicant organisations include the fisheries industry, non-profit-making organisations and universities.

4. The approved projects can generally provide immediate support to the industry, including the provision of on-site veterinary and vet drug prescription services, and the development of quality pellet feed from food waste. Some of the projects map out the direction of development for the industry and promote sustainable development. Projects such as training in modernised fish farming can provide the industry with opportunities to experience and practise modern aquaculture. As for the development of capture fisheries, SFDF also subsidised study tours for local fishermen to explore business opportunities. Among the approved applications, 14 are related to aquaculture, while the remaining 4 are about

¹ Another 16 applications have been rejected and 7 applications have been withdrawn by the applicants.

capture fisheries, recreational fisheries, and containers for marine fish. Among the approved projects, 7 have been completed, benefiting over 400 fishermen/aquaculturists. The details of the approved projects are at [Annex 1](#).

Equipment Improvement Project

5. Apart from the projects above, to further drive the modernisation of the local fisheries industry and benefit more fishermen/ aquaculturists directly, the Equipment Improvement Project was set up under SFDF in late 2017 to provide financial assistance for fishermen/ aquaculturists to procure equipment to increase its productivity and facilitate sustainable development. At present, 32 equipment items are eligible for procurement by the industry, including propulsion systems or navigational equipment for daily operation (e.g. environmental-friendly outboard motor, radar device) and automatic or ancillary fish capture equipment (e.g. automatic feeding machine, fish finder). Up to the present, 10 applications have been received and approved, involving a total funding of about \$65 million benefiting more than 1 700 fishermen/ aquaculturists.

Improvement on application procedures and support

6. Since the establishment of SFDF, a total of 28 projects have been approved, involving a total funding of about \$159 million. The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) has regularly reviewed the operation of SFDF and rolled out a series of measures to improve its efficiency. The measures include simplifying the application and vetting procedures; enhancing the support during applications procedures; and allowing more projects and equipment purchases to receive funding under SFDF. Furthermore, AFCD has stepped up publicity efforts, including organising liaison meetings, seminars and workshops, distributing pamphlets, and releasing the latest updates on online social media platforms etc, so as to introduce SFDF to the fisheries industry. The details of the measures are at [Annex 2](#). Following the implementation of the measures, the number of projects approved per year in the past two years was 3 times of the past average.

Opportunities and development direction

7. The Government has been active all along in supporting the industry to switch to sustainable development by, among others, promoting aquaculture development and supporting the industry in the exploration of fishing grounds in other waters. In light of the development opportunities in the Greater Bay Area (GBA), some local fishermen/ aquaculturists are prepared to develop deep sea mariculture in the GBA waters. Moreover, some local fishermen are interested to engage in overseas capture fisheries business in other places. SFDF is currently exploring to provide relevant support, in order to bring new opportunities to local fishermen/ aquaculturists to broaden their development prospect.

Conservation of Local Fisheries Resources

Monitoring and conservation of fisheries resources

8. To monitor the situation of local fisheries resources, AFCD has been conducting fisheries surveys to collect scientific data about the fisheries resources in Hong Kong waters. To assess the effectiveness of the trawl ban and other relevant fisheries management measures implemented since 2012 on the recovery of fisheries resources in Hong Kong, AFCD conducted monitoring surveys before and after the implementation of the measures² and commissioned the South China Sea Fisheries Research Institute of the Chinese Academy of Fisheries Sciences to perform the scientific analysis of the data collected from the surveys. The results generally demonstrated signs of recovery of the fisheries resources in Hong Kong waters after the implementation of relevant measures. AFCD will continue to monitor the situation of local fisheries resources with a view to continuously obtaining data and assessing the effectiveness of the management measures.

9. To enhance local fisheries resources, AFCD has explored restocking at appropriate locations including selecting suitable local species, management and release methods of fish fingerlings, and new technology of monitoring the fingerlings after restocking trials. In 2019, AFCD conducted a small scale fish restocking trial by releasing native species of high commercial value, such as red grouper and star snapper fingerlings, at the sites with artificial reef deployment at Yan Chau Tong Marine Park, and monitored the condition of the fingerlings released with new technology. The data obtained will serve as reference when formulating restocking programmes of a larger scale in future.

Enhancing fisheries enforcement strategies

10. Apart from conservation, combating illegal fishing activities is also crucial in protecting local fisheries resources. Fishing with the use of unregistered vessels (both local and non-local ones) under the Fisheries Protection Ordinance (Cap. 171) (the Ordinance) and fishing by any apparatus prohibited³ under the Fisheries Protection Regulations (Cap. 171A) (the Regulations) are both illegal fishing.

11. AFCD has been acting vigorously to combat illegal fishing activities. The dedicated enforcement team carries out patrols against illegal fishing activities at irregular hours (including the small hours) in the blackspots of illegal fishing in Hong Kong waters. AFCD will, based on the information and intelligence gathered from patrols, exercise flexible deployment of resources to combat illegal fishing activities. It also maintains close liaison with the Marine Police with a view to

² The survey was conducted from 2010 to 2015 in Hong Kong waters.

³ The prohibited apparatus includes explosives, toxic substances, apparatus which produces or transmits electricity, and dredging, suction and trawling devices.

mounting joint operations (including using the vessel arrest system to intercept trawlers which refuse to stop for inspection) as and when appropriate. Last year, AFCD conducted over 1 530 patrols and 1 240 vessel inspections respectively in Hong Kong waters, and mounted 55 joint operations with the Marine Police. In the last three years (2018-2020), AFCD successfully prosecuted 8, 6 and 14 cases of illegal fishing activities respectively.

12. A number of illegal fishing activities involve Mainland fishing vessels and Mainlanders. To step up enforcement action against cross-boundary illegal fishing, AFCD regularly exchanges intelligence and conducts joint enforcement operations with the Guangdong Provincial Marine Comprehensive Law Enforcement General Brigade (廣東省海洋綜合執法總隊)(the General Brigade). AFCD will also pass on the information of the Mainland fishing vessels found engaging in illegal fishing activities in Hong Kong waters during patrols to the General Brigade for follow-up investigation. Moreover, AFCD has appointed contractors to remove the fishing gear left at Hong Kong waters by Mainland fishermen under the supervision of law enforcement officers so as to combat their fishing activities and minimise the impact on local fishermen.

13. AFCD has encountered many challenges in conducting enforcement operations at sea in recent years. Most vessels engaging in illegal fishing would not stop for inspection according to the instructions or warnings of law enforcement officers, and would swiftly leave Hong Kong waters. It is also difficult to intercept trawlers given that their size and engine power are generally larger than those of other fishing vessels. To conduct enforcement operations against these vessels under the unstable conditions at sea involves substantial resources and a certain level of risks. These vessels would also have their licence numbers covered, making it difficult for law enforcement officers to follow up and investigate. Moreover, the blackspots of illegal fishing have expanded from mainly southern Hong Kong waters to the west or even the Ninepin Group in the east and Mirs Bay in the north.

14. To strengthen enforcement capability, the Food and Health Bureau has provided AFCD with resources to increase manpower. AFCD has strengthened and consolidated internal resources last year to set up a dedicated enforcement team⁴ at sea as mentioned above. The number of members in the enforcement team and the number of vessels have increased from 18 to 34 and from three to seven respectively, enhancing the mobility and responsiveness in combating illegal fishing. Furthermore, AFCD plans to apply technology in its enforcement work, such as using real-time satellite information to help identify fishing vessels engaged in illegal fishing, especially trawlers, thereby knowing the real-time location and the number of vessels involved in illegal fishing. It enables the enforcement team to deploy resources more flexibly to target their efforts at combating activities at blackspots of illegal fishing, so as to enhance the efficiency in law enforcement. The

⁴ The dedicated law enforcement team is mainly responsible for performing enforcement duties at sea under the Fisheries Protection Ordinance (Cap. 171) and the Marine Parks Ordinance (Cap. 476).

relevant system also helps the enforcement team obtain the information of these fishing vessels, such as their licence numbers and past trips, for follow-up investigation and tracking.

15. Besides, AFCD has been keeping in touch with fishermen organisations to get hold of more information on illegal fishing so as to adjust the arrangements of patrols and enforcement operations for greater effectiveness. AFCD plans to work with fishermen, who will use their fishing vessels to conduct patrols at sea and help gather intelligence on illegal fishing in Hong Kong waters. As the fishing vessels involved in illegal fishing would be less vigilant to other fishing vessels, fishermen can record the location, time and information of these vessels more accurately. Fishermen's knowledge of fisheries operations will also help the enforcement team formulate more effective enforcement operations and investigation.

16. AFCD will continue to work closely with the Marine Police to explore feasible measures to carry out enforcement operations at sea more effectively, particularly against trawlers which refuse to stop. AFCD will continue to inform the Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs of Guangdong Province, the General Brigade and its branches of illegal fishing activities of Mainland fishermen in Hong Kong waters, and seek their assistance to control at source and prevent Mainland fishermen from entering Hong Kong waters for fishing. AFCD also plans to review the deployment and strategy of joint enforcement operations at sea with the General Brigade and its branches on a regular basis to enhance the effectiveness of enforcement.

Advice Sought

17. Members are invited to comment on the content of this paper.

**Food and Health Bureau
Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department
February 2021**

Details of the Approved Projects under the Sustainable Fisheries

Development Fund

(as at 31 December 2020)

General project	
(i)	<p>Mariculture Using Enclosure Net Cages #</p> <p>The project involves using large enclosure net cages extending from the water surface down to the seabed for culturing white flower croaker (mainly for its swim bladder to produce fish maw) together with two other species, namely giant grouper and pompano. Both the culture system and the culture of white flower croaker are new to Hong Kong.</p>
(ii)	<p>Fishery & Eco, Conservation Program (Cheung Chau Waters) #</p> <p>The project helps fishermen switch to recreational fisheries by equipping them with the necessary knowledge and skills as well as practical experience of operating eco-tours. It also involves planning and design of new eco-tour routes and related facilities which will be conducive to the development of new recreational fisheries in the waters of Cheung Chau.</p>
(iii)	<p>Fisheries-related Eco-tour Guide Training Programme for Fishermen (North-eastern Waters) #</p> <p>The project seeks to help the fishermen develop or switch to fisheries-related ecotourism business by equipping them with the necessary knowledge and skills as well as practical experience of operating eco-tours.</p>
(iv)	<p>Depurated Oyster Project Proposal#</p> <p>The project makes use of a depuration process and a monitoring programme to enhance the safety and quality of local oysters. It seeks to build its own brand, extend the sales network and, in the long run, maintain a stable supply of a variety of oyster products that are safe and fresh for the local market.</p>
(v)	<p>Promotion and Support Scheme on Organic Certification for the Organic Aquaculture in Hong Kong</p> <p>The project provides assistance to the fish farmers in obtaining organic</p>

General project	
	<p>accreditation and organises activities to enhance public understanding of organic aquaculture and to promote the development of a high-end market for organic aquaculture products.</p>
(vi)	<p>Establishment and Demonstration of Recirculation Aquaculture System for Fry Culture on Rafts</p> <p>The project aims to develop grouper fry culture techniques with the use of a seawater recirculating system on fish rafts and to promote such culture techniques to local fish farmers.</p>
(vii)	<p>Lai Chi Wo Hatchery Development for Sustainable Fishery in Hong Kong Waters</p> <p>The project introduces fish hatching and larval rearing techniques in brackish water ponds to supply marine fish fry to the local aquaculture industry.</p>
(viii)	<p>Hong Kong Pearl Farm Centre</p> <p>The project aims to assist fish farmers in switching to the high value-added pearl cultivation industry and recreational fishing, and to enhance the competitiveness of the industry by demonstrating pearl cultivation in local fish raft and its pearl selling, and organising pearl eco tours to promote recreational fishing.</p>
(ix)	<p>Safe and Quality Fish Production: Development of High Grade Pellets Using Food Waste for Three Popular Marine Fish Species #</p> <p>The project makes use of local food waste to produce pellet feed for the local mariculture industry, which will facilitate the sustainable development of the industry and benefit the environment.</p>
(x)	<p>Improving Fish Health and Production in Hong Kong #</p> <p>The project aims to improve the sustainability of local aquaculture industry through effective fish disease control and prevention. The project involves provision of vet training and services, as well as a study and promotion to fisheries industry in relation to common fish diseases and their treatment.</p>

General project

(xi) BEC × AFFS–Awareness and opportunities

This project aims to use the branding of "food safety, local produce and environmental friendliness" of Accredited Fish Farm Scheme (AFFS) to create a platform for providing business opportunities on AFFS fishery produce for fish farmers, and the food and beverage and hotel industry with a view to broadening the markets of AFFS fishery produce.

(xii) Feasibility Study and Trial on Improvement of Durability and Strength of Fish Containers for Marine Fish

This project aims to produce new fish containers with more environmentally friendly and safer materials through research studies and conduct tests on the practicability of the strengthened fish containers and the industry's acceptability towards the new fish containers.

(xiii) Hatchery Seed Production for Sustainable Oyster Aquaculture in Hong Kong

This project aims at establishing the first oyster hatchery base in Hong Kong with the introduction of modernised oyster hatchery and culture technologies. This project also aims at providing oyster seeds of better quality and stability to the local industry and promoting the sustainable development of oyster industry by transferring related technologies.

(xiv) Modernised Production and Research Plan for Sustainable Mariculture Development

This project aims at providing lectures and hands-on trainings with the use of the mass-production aquaculture platform, which will be established in the Tung Lung Chau fish culture zone shortly, with a view to assisting the industry to develop the modernised and sustainable mariculture practice.

(xv) Lobster Culture Farming Proposal

This project aims at establishing the first local lobster culture centre for demonstrating and training purposes for the industry. A series of workshops, sharing sessions and visits will be organised regularly with a view to transferring and sharing knowledge and experience of lobster culture with aquaculturists and other interested parties.

(xvi) Study Tour to Oman Salalah and Dubai #

This project provides local capture fishermen (including those engaged in distant water fishing) with opportunities to get familiarised with the capture fishery and its operation in Oman, with a view to exploring and evaluating the feasibility of developing offshore fishery there through a study tour and seminars.

(xvii) The Non-medical Parts of Traditional Chinese Medicine as Additives in Aquaculture Feeds

This project aims at extracting the effective composition from residual (non-medical) parts of Chinese medicine as feed additives to enhance the cultured fishes' immunity, with a view to reducing the treatment cost and antimicrobial use, which also promotes the sustainable development of aquaculture.

(xviii) Improving Fish Health and Production in Hong Kong 2020

This project aims at enhancing veterinary service and support to local aquaculturists to enhance the productivity through providing on site veterinary and pharmaceutical services, developing new solutions for treating fish diseases and the application of medicated feeds, training veterinary students specialised in aquatic animals, organising outreach activities relating to fish health and fish diseases management and providing support to fishermen on sustainable development proposals.

Completed projects

**Measures to enhance the performance
of the Sustainable Fisheries Development Fund (SFDF)**

Streamlining the administration of SFDF
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To improve vetting procedures, including direct vetting of all applications by the Sustainable Fisheries Development Fund Advisory Committee (SFSDAC) instead of initial vetting by a working group; and the vetting of projects of a simple nature or involving funding of not more than \$1 million by circulation instead of at meetings.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To streamline the application and vetting procedures for the Equipment Improvement Project (EIP), including increasing the maximum number of participants in each application from 200 to 400; granting each eligible participant funding approval up to \$30,000 in advance for the purchase of items on the list of pre-approved equipment/materials endorsed by the SFSDAC; and the vetting of applications by circulation.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To improve the application guidelines for SFDF and EIP so as to streamline the application procedures.
Facilitating and encouraging the trade to apply for SFDF
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To arrange individual consultation meetings with potential applicants so as to support them in preparing proposals and completing the application forms.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To simplify the application forms by requiring the essential information only and adopting a simplified format such as fill-in-the-blank and multiple choice.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To upload the application form template on the SFDF website to facilitate applicants in completing the forms.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To meet the fisheries sector to explore potential projects, and to encourage and facilitate them to make use of SFDF for sustainable development of the trade.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To regularly update the equipment on the EIP list so as to meet the changing operational needs of the fisheries sector. From the launch of EIP up to the present, as supported by the SFSDAC, the number of equipment items that can be purchased by fishermen has increased from 16 to 32, with new additions such as outboard motor, high pressure cleaning machine, auxiliary power unit or generator, ultra-low temperature freezer or ice-making machine, mower, hydraulic steering device, and fishing gear for sustainable fisheries.
Enhanced monitoring of approved projects
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To strengthen the monitoring of approved projects so as to enhance the management and monitoring of the progress and performance of the approved projects.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To provide templates of receipts, revenue statements and balance sheets to grantees so as to facilitate them to submit the relevant information.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To meet with the grantees so as to understand the progress of the projects and explain the information or documents required with a view to saving the time for correspondence.

Publicity and promotion of SFDF
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To publicise SFDF through various channels, including organising or participating in relevant meetings, seminars, and workshops, e. g. organising a workshop with the Open University of Hong Kong on compiling applications under SFDF and SADF, and participating in the “SME One - Fund Fair 2019” organised by the Hong Kong Productivity Council as well as seminars organised by the Hong Kong Startup Council of the Federation of Hong Kong Industries.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To publish simple and easy-to-understand promotional leaflets on SFDF for distribution through various channels.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To publicise SFDF on social media regularly.