

**Speaking Note for Secretary for Food and Health
at the Special Meeting of the Finance Committee
on 8 April 2020**

Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene
--

Chairman and Honourable Members,

The Food and Health Bureau (FHB) is committed to ensuring food safety and environmental hygiene as well as promoting the sustainable development of the local agriculture and fisheries industry.

2. In the 2020-21 Estimates, about \$10.53 billion is earmarked for recurrent expenditure in the policy portfolio of “Environment and Food”, representing an increase of about \$1.34 billion (14.6%) over the previous year and accounting for 2.2% of recurrent government expenditure.

Public Markets

3. We are taking forward a number of new public market projects that are at different stages of planning, including building a new public market in Tin Shui Wai. New design and operation model are being considered with a view to enhancing business vibrancy and meeting the needs of residents. Meanwhile, we are actively undertaking the development of a temporary market in Tin Shui Wai, which is expected to be completed and commissioned by the end of this year at the soonest. We have already consulted Yuen Long District Council on these two projects.

4. As to the Market Modernisation Programme, we are carrying out the overhaul of Aberdeen Market as a prototype. Support from Southern District Council has been obtained.

Pest Control

5. On mosquito control, we will consolidate the results achieved last year, which include that only one local dengue fever case was recorded when it has become an endemic illness in the region and that the ovitrap index for *Aedes albopictus* was maintained at a low level throughout the year. Government departments are installing about 2 700 new mosquito traps in each district to prevent mosquito breeding before start of the rainy season. Besides, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) will place about 5 000 ovitraps with new design throughout the territory to calculate the number of adult mosquitoes directly so as to facilitate various departments to formulate more targeted anti-mosquito measures.

6. As for rodent control, FEHD is studying the use of thermal imaging cameras with artificial intelligence analytical functions to monitor the area and extent of rodent activities. The data captured can quantify and assess the effectiveness of anti-rodent work by directly comparing the rodent population density before and after anti-rodent operations. FEHD is conducting field trials in Kowloon City District in order to assess the feasibility of quantifying rodent surveillance by the technology.

Food Safety

7. The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of FEHD will implement a series of enhancement measures, including upgrading and developing various information technology systems, with a view to providing online services for trade facilitation on the one hand, and strengthening the support to its frontline staff in control and surveillance of imported food, and reinforcing its capability in management of food safety incidents, risk assessment and food traceability on the other. The first phase online services have already been rolled out at the end of last year and in the first quarter of this year to enable food traders to complete registration electronically through a portal and submit online applications for import licences and import permission for certain types of controlled food. In the next phase, the portal will cover applications for more types of food.

Animal Welfare

8. The Government attaches great importance to animal welfare and animal management. We conducted a public consultation on enhancing animal welfare last year. The majority of respondents supported stronger protection of animal welfare. We will come up with the legislative amendment proposals as well as the way forward after studying these views.

New Agriculture Policy

9. We are striving to implement the New Agriculture Policy. Funding for the construction works of Agri-Park Phase 1 is supported by the

LegCo panel and the Public Works Subcommittee. We hope to obtain funding approval from the Finance Committee as soon as possible so that the construction works could commence smoothly.

10. The Sustainable Agricultural Development Fund (SADF) has approved ten applications so far, and also provided direct funding for farmers to acquire farming equipment, involving a total commitment of about \$110 million.

Fisheries Development

11. As for fisheries, the Sustainable Fisheries Development Fund (SFDF) has approved 23 projects with a total commitment of over \$126 million to support aquaculture and capture fisheries and help fishermen acquire modernised capture or culture equipment.

12. In addition, we are currently conducting environmental impact assessments for designating new fish culture zones, and new marine fish culture licences are expected to be issued in the first half of the year to promote the development of aquaculture.

Anti-epidemic Fund

13. The Government has established the Food Licence Holders Subsidy Scheme and Licensed Hawkers Subsidy Scheme under the Anti-epidemic Fund to provide financial support to the food business sector

and licensed hawkers hit hard by the COVID-19 outbreak. The Anti-epidemic Fund also provides subsidies to operators of live marine fish wholesale stalls in Fish Marketing Organization markets and owners of fishing vessels or fish collector vessels with Mainland deckhands.

14. FEHD and the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) have started to accept applications since early March. FEHD has received 27 700 and 5 450 applications under the Food Licence Holders Subsidy Scheme and Licensed Hawkers Subsidy Scheme respectively. As of last Friday (3 April), the total numbers of applications approved together with payment authorised under the two schemes are 18 200 and 4 677 respectively, with subsidies totaling over \$2,495 million. AFCD has also received 1 341 and 66 applications from owners of fishing vessels or fish collectors and live marine fish wholesale traders respectively. A total of 538 and 45 applications from these owners and traders have already been approved, involving about \$91.5 million of subsidies. These two departments will make disbursement to the eligible applicants as soon as possible.

15. Chairman, my colleagues and I are happy to answer questions from Members.