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Replies to initial written questions raised by Finance Committee Members in examining the Estimates of Expenditure 2018-19

Director of Bureau : Secretary for Food and Health

Session No. : 13

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CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

S-FHB(FE)01

(Question Serial No. S0029)

Head: (22) Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department

Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not Specified

Programme: (1) Agriculture, Fisheries and Fresh Food Wholesale Markets

Controlling Officer: Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation
(Dr LEUNG Siu-fai)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Food and Health

Question:

Further to Reply Serial No. FSTB(FS)071, please inform this Committee of the following:

The value of domestic exports of fresh produce and agricultural and fishery products from Hong Kong to overseas regions and countries in 2017 was merely \$100,000, marking a decrease of 98% as compared to that in 2016. What is/are the reason(s) for the decrease? What measures and policies does the Government put in place to boost the value of domestic exports of fresh produce and agricultural and fishery products from Hong Kong to overseas regions and countries?

Asked by: Hon AU Nok-hin

Reply:

Hong Kong is a service-oriented economy, with a relatively small agricultural and fisheries sector which primarily serves the local population. The Government's policy aims to promote the sustainable development of the agricultural and fisheries industry which can provide local consumers with quality products. Whether farmers / fishermen choose to export their products is an entirely market-driven decision.

- End -

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

S-FHB(FE)02

(Question Serial No. S0085)

Head: (22) Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department

Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not Specified

Programme: (1) Agriculture, Fisheries and Fresh Food Wholesale Markets

Controlling Officer: Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation
(Dr LEUNG Siu-fai)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Food and Health

Question:

Further to Reply Serial No. FHB(FE)077 which stated that “the decrease in the quantity of vegetables marketed through the Vegetable Marketing Organization (VMO) in 2017 was mainly due to keen competition from direct marketing of vegetables bypassing the wholesale market”, what measures and policies will the Government put in place to increase the vegetables marketed through VMO?

Asked by: Hon AU Nok-hin

Reply:

In response to the highly competitive market, the Vegetable Marketing Organization is striving to improve its services to retain business. It has been working with wholesalers and other stakeholders to develop branding for products traded through its market, reengineer its services to meet the needs of wholesalers and customers, optimise its various trading facilities, and expand its product range.

- End -

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

S-FHB(FE)03

(Question Serial No. SV024)

Head: (22) Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department

Subhead (No. & title): (000) Operational expenses

Programme: (3) Animal, Plant and Fisheries Regulation and Technical Services

Controlling Officer: Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation
(Dr LEUNG Siu-fai)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Food and Health

Question:

A follow-up question on Reply Serial No. FHB(FE)028:

Please set out the number of dogs legally bred by year.

Asked by: Hon CHAN Chi-chuen

Reply:

Since the commencement of the Public Health (Animals and Birds) (Trading and Breeding) Regulations in March 2017 and up to end of March 2018, a total of 470 dogs were bred by licensed dog breeders.

- End -

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY**S-FHB(FE)04****(Question Serial No. SV023)**Head: (22) Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation DepartmentSubhead (No. & title): (-) Not SpecifiedProgramme: (1) Agriculture, Fisheries and Fresh Food Wholesale MarketsControlling Officer: Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation
(Dr LEUNG Siu-fai)Director of Bureau: Secretary for Food and HealthQuestion:

A follow-up question on Reply Serial No. FHB(FE)076:

Please advise on the production quantity of local fish.

Asked by: Hon KWOK Ka-kiReply:

The quantity of the local fisheries production (capture and aquaculture fisheries) over the past 5 years is tabulated below:

Calendar year	Local fisheries production (tonnes)
2013	173 000
2014	164 000
2015	148 000
2016	147 000
2017	132 000

- End -

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

S-FHB(FE)05

(Question Serial No. SV025)

Head: (22) Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department

Subhead (No. & title): (000) Operational expenses

Programme: (3) Animal, Plant and Fisheries Regulation and Technical Services

Controlling Officer: Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation
(Dr LEUNG Siu-fai)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Food and Health

Question:

A follow-up question on Reply Serial No. FHB(FE)093:

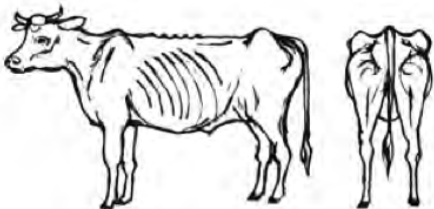
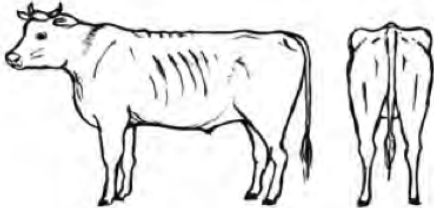
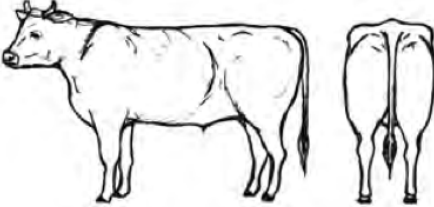
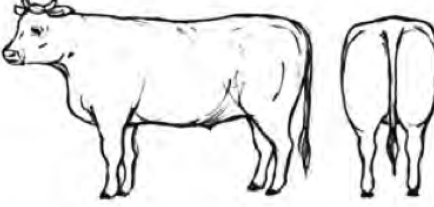
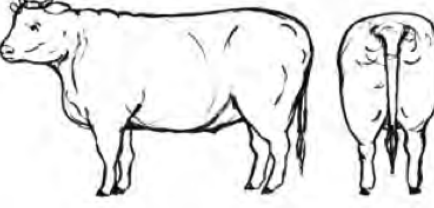
Please provide copies of documents about the “Body Condition Scoring System”.

Asked by: Hon MO Claudia

Reply:

The Body Condition Scoring System is a method recognised internationally in the veterinary field to evaluate the fat amount of an animal, which can in turn reflect the condition of the animal. It is done by either visual inspection or a combination of visual inspection and palpation of key bone structures for fat cover. The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department adopts a body condition scoring system on a scale of 5 for evaluating stray cattle, with score 1 being emaciated and score 5 being obese (Annex). The score may be related to a number of factors such as the amount of food intake, age, nutrition, disease, pregnancy status and lactation status of an animal.

The Body Condition Scoring System in a scale of 5

	Condition score 1 - Backbone prominent - Hips and shoulder bones prominent - Ribs clearly visible - Tail-head area recessed - Skeletal body outline
	Condition score 2 - Backbone visible - Hips and shoulder bones visible - Ribs visible faintly - Tail-head area slightly recessed - Body outline bony
	Condition score 3 - Hip bones visible faintly - Ribs generally not visible - Tail-head area not recessed - Body outline almost smooth
	Condition score 4 - Hip bones not visible - Ribs well covered - Tail-head area slightly lumpy - Body outline rounded
	Condition score 5 - Hip bones showing fat deposit - Ribs very well covered - Tail-head area very lumpy - Body outline bulging due to fat

- End -

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

S-FHB(FE)06

(Question Serial No. S0078)

Head: (22) Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department

Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not Specified

Programme: (3) Animal, Plant and Fisheries Regulation and Technical Services

Controlling Officer: Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation
(Dr LEUNG Siu-fai)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Food and Health

Question:

To follow up on Reply Serial No. FHB(FE)090, which stated that "In general, these animals will stay in animal management centres (AMCs) temporarily for about 10 to 20 days. For those without a microchip, AMCs will keep them for at least 4 days to allow time for their owners to reclaim them. Only animals that are not suitable for adoption or not adopted at the end of the process will be euthanised, would the Government provide a supplementary reply regarding the following questions:

- (a) What was the respective average duration of stay at AMCs for the animals not suitable for adoption and the animals not adopted among those that were euthanised, by animal types (i.e. dogs, cats and other animals), over the past year?
- (b) What were the respective average occupancy rates of the 4 AMCs over the past year? (If possible, please set out the data by months.)
- (c) As mentioned by the Director, a 4-day observation has been implemented under the current ordinance. Would the Government provide additional information on relevant legislation and explain with justifications why 4 days are sufficient?
- (d) If the accommodation space in AMCs allows, will the Government consider making legislative amendment to extend the 4-day limit? If not, what are the reasons?
- (e) Does the above 4-day observation include public holidays? If holidays are involved, will the owners be unable to reclaim their animals or shorten the duration for reclaiming their animals as a result of the staff on leave in the department concerned? What measures have been taken to ensure that the owners can reclaim their animals as usual during holidays?

Asked by: Hon TAM Man-ho, Jeremy

Reply:

- (a) The average duration of stay of animals in Animal Management Centres (AMCs) of the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) by species in 2017 is tabulated below:

Calendar year	Average period (days)		
	Dogs	Cats	Others ¹
2017	13.1	13.0	65.8

¹ Including small mammals (rabbits, hamsters, chinchillas, guinea pigs and rats), reptiles, pigs / cattle, poultry / birds, etc.

AFCD does not have separate statistics on the average duration of stay of animals in AMCs which were euthanised.

- (b) AFCD does not have statistics on the average occupancy rate of AMCs.
- (c) & (d) The Rabies Ordinance (Cap. 421) (the Ordinance) aims to control rabies and related public health risks. According to section 38(2)(c) of the Ordinance, if the owner / keeper of an animal detained under the Ordinance cannot after reasonable inquiry be found or ascertained within 4 days after the commencement of such detention, the Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation may order the forfeiture of the animal or dispose of it in a way as he considers appropriate. This is in general applicable to stray dogs and cats caught by AFCD. This could help prevent spreading of rabies, while allowing sufficient time for owners / keepers to reclaim the animals back. Regarding other stray animals (for example reptiles), reference is made to the above arrangement as to allow reasonable time for owners to reclaim them.

In addition to allowing time for reclaiming stray animals, AMCs will also try to proactively locate the owner of a microchipped animal, based on the information available. For those animals without owners or those handed over to AFCD by their owners, AFCD will assess their suitability for rehoming, and then try to arrange re-homing as far as possible.

A 4-day period is only the minimum duration for animal detention at AMCs. In practice, where the circumstances in AMCs permit, animals will be allowed to stay in AMCs much longer than 4 days, as shown in part (a) above. We have no plan to amend the current arrangement.

- (e) The “4-day period” stated in (c) & (d) above refers to 4 calendar days. AMCs provide services 7 days a week including Sundays and public holidays. The general public may go to AMCs to reclaim their animals during AMCs’ office hours.

-End-

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

S-FHB(FE)07

(Question Serial No. S0080)

Head: (49) Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not specified

Programme: (1) Food Safety and Public Health

Controlling Officer: Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene (Miss Vivian LAU)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Food and Health

Question:

With regard to Reply Serial No. FHB(FE)209, please advise this Committee of the following:

The reason(s) for the decrease in the number of fresh vegetable vehicles inspected by the Centre for Food Safety and the Customs and Excise Department at Man Kam To Control Point by 7.9% in 2017 as compared to 2016.

Asked by: Hon AU Nok-hin

Reply:

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) takes food samples at the import, wholesale and retail levels and adopts a risk-based principle in determining the types of samples to be collected, the sampling frequency, the sample size, and the types of laboratory analysis to be conducted. CFS reviews and adjusts the sampling strategy from time to time to ensure food safety.

Apart from inspection of vegetables at the Man Kam To Food Control Point, CFS also conducts surveillance checks at the retail level. The total number of vegetable and fruit samples taken at these levels for testing remained generally around 30 000 in the past few years, with a satisfaction rate of over 99.5%.

- End -

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

S-FHB(FE)08

(Question Serial No. S0082)

Head: (49) Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not specified

Programme: (3) Market Management and Hawker Control

Controlling Officer: Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene (Miss Vivian LAU)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Food and Health

Question:

Will the \$2 billion earmarked for implementing a Market Modernisation Programme cover the compensations for the affected stall operators? If yes, what are the details? If not, will they be compensated under other government expenditure items?

Asked by: Hon AU Nok-hin

Reply:

The \$2 billion earmarked for implementing the Market Modernisation Programme will be used to fund works projects to improve the facilities of existing public markets. The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department will draw up arrangements as appropriate for tenants affected by these projects having regard to the established policy and practice. Details of such arrangements and the expenditure involved will depend on the circumstances of individual cases.

- End -

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

S-FHB(FE)09

(Question Serial No. S0083)

Head: (49) Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not specified

Programme: (3) Market Management and Hawker Control

Controlling Officer: Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene (Miss Vivian LAU)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Food and Health

Question:

The Government set out 11 public markets which have met the requisite threshold for the retrofitting of air-conditioning in Annex III to Reply Serial No. FHB(FE)228. What are the procedures and details (such as feasibility study, tender exercise and reprovisioning of stall tenants) of the retrofitting works after it is confirmed that the threshold has been met? Can any roadmap and schedule be provided?

Asked by: Hon AU Nok-hin

Reply:

The major steps in taking forward retrofitting of air-conditioning (A/C) in public markets that have met the requisite threshold include preliminary and detailed feasibility studies, consultation with tenants and other relevant stakeholders on the project scope and details, as well as seeking funding approval from the Legislative Council.

Among the 11 public markets/cooked food centres which have secured the requisite support from the tenants for installing A/C systems, we sought the views of the Legislative Council's Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene in March 2018 on the proposal regarding the Tai Wai Market. Preparatory work in different stages is underway for the remaining 10 markets/cooked food centres.

- End -

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY**S-FHB(FE)10****(Question Serial No. S0084)**Head: (49) Food and Environmental Hygiene DepartmentSubhead (No. & title): (-) Not specifiedProgramme: (1) Food Safety and Public HealthControlling Officer: Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene (Miss Vivian LAU)Director of Bureau: Secretary for Food and HealthQuestion:

With regard to Reply Serial No. FHB(FE)145:

- (a) please provide information, including names and addresses, on the Mainland vegetable farms, orchards, poultry farms, pig farms, cattle farms, goat farms and aquatic food animal farms supplying products to Hong Kong over the past 5 years;
- (b) please set out the number of inspections conducted by the Department to these production farms over the past 5 years, with a breakdown by province and type of farm, namely vegetable farms, orchards, poultry farms, pig farms, cattle farms, goat farms and aquatic food animal farms, as per the following table:

e.g. 2012

Province / City / Autonomous region	Vegetable farms	Orchards	Poultry farms	Pig farms	Cattle farms	Goat farms	Aquatic food animal farms
e.g. Guangdong	Irregularities found / number of inspections / total number of vegetable farms	Irregularities found / number of inspections / total number of orchards	Irregularities found / number of inspections / total number of poultry farms	Irregularities found / number of inspections / total number of pig farms	Irregularities found / number of inspections / total number of cattle farms	Irregularities found / number of inspections / total number of goat farms	Irregularities found / number of inspections / total number of aquatic food animal farms

Asked by: Hon AU Nok-hinReply:

- (a) The Centre for Food Safety has all along closely liaised with the Mainland authorities to arrange audit inspections to the Mainland vegetable farms, orchards, poultry farms, pig farms, cattle farms, goat farms and aquatic food animal farms to ensure their compliance with our requirements. As at 31 December 2017, some 3 828 Mainland farms were eligible for supplying food to Hong Kong. The lists of these farms are maintained by the Mainland authorities and posted onto their websites.

(b) Information on the types and number of registered Mainland farms inspected in the past 5 years is given below –

Calendar Year	Vegetable Farms	Orchards	Poultry Farms	Pig Farms	Cattle Farms	Goat Farms	Aquatic Food Animal Farms	Total
2013	16	0	29	13	7	0	21	86
2014	17	3	29	8	5	0	7	69
2015	13	3	22	14	6	0	9	67
2016	9	3	25	19	3	1	5	65
2017	18	1	25	8	4	0	7	63

- End -

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

S-FHB(FE)11

(Question Serial No. SV022)

Head: (49) Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not specified

Programme: (1) Food Safety and Public Health

Controlling Officer: Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene (Miss Vivian LAU)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Food and Health

Question:

Follow-up question to FHB(FE)135:

Please provide the amount of chilled chicken supplied from the Mainland, the ability of local farms to increase supply and describe the related policy of the department/bureau.

Asked by: Hon CHEUNG Yu-yan, Tommy

Reply:

In the past 3 years (i.e. 2015 – 2017), the amount of chilled chicken supplied from the Mainland to Hong Kong were 48 456 tonnes, 57 418 tonnes and 61 996 tonnes respectively.

The rearing capacity of local chicken farms has been capped at 1.3 million in order to minimise the risk of human infection of Avian Influenza through live chickens, while providing a steady supply of live chickens to meet the market demand.

- End -

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY**S-FHB(FE)12****(Question Serial No. S0076)**Head: (49) Food and Environmental Hygiene DepartmentSubhead (No. & title): (-) Not specifiedProgramme: (3) Market Management and Hawker ControlControlling Officer: Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene (Miss Vivian LAU)Director of Bureau: Secretary for Food and HealthQuestion:

By making reference to the existing air-conditioned public markets, please provide information on the estimated expenditure required for undertaking the retrofitting of air-conditioning in all non-air-conditioned public markets across the territory as per the table below:

District	Name of market	Estimated cost of installation	Estimated expenditure on repair per annum	Estimated electricity charge per annum
	1.			
	2.			
	...			
	Total			

Asked by: Hon HO Kai-mingReply:

The capital and recurrent expenditure of any project that may be implemented under the Market Modernisation Programme announced in the Budget Speech can only be determined when the scope of works is finalised, and upon completion of technical feasibility studies and cost-effectiveness assessment. As an illustration, we propose to retrofit the Tai Wai Market with an air-conditioning (A/C) system at an estimated cost of \$109.7 million in money-of-the-day prices subject to funding approval by the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council (FC). The proposal is scheduled for scrutiny by the Public Works Subcommittee under the FC in the first half of 2018.

The recurrent A/C expenses incurred by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department in 2017-18 in the operation of 32 air-conditioned public markets (with some at cooked food centres only) amounted to \$61.8 million.

- End -