

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY**

**FHB(FE)129**

**(Question Serial No. 0899)**

Head: (49) Food and Environmental Hygiene Department  
Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not specified  
Programme: (2) Environmental Hygiene and Related Services  
Controlling Officer: Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene (Miss Vivian LAU)  
Director of Bureau: Secretary for Food and Health  
This question originates from: Estimates on Expenditure Volume I Page 250-252 (if applicable)

Question (Member Question No. 47):

With regard to the issue of licences relating to live chickens, please advise on the following:

- (a) the number of permissions granted for selling of fresh poultry carcass in each of the past three years (i.e. from 2011-12 to 2013-14), as well as the expenditure and manpower involved; and
- (b) the policy and direction of the Government in respect of the sale of live chickens, as well as the estimated expenditure and manpower to be involved.

Asked by: Hon. HO Chun-yin, Steven

Reply:

- (a) In 2011, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department issued one new fresh provision shop (FPS) licence with permission for selling fresh poultry carcass and granted permission to one existing FPS licensee for selling fresh poultry carcass. No new FPS licence or permission to existing licensees for selling fresh poultry carcass was granted in 2012 and 2013. There is no separate breakdown of the expenditure and manpower involved in the handling of applications for licence or permission for selling fresh poultry carcass.
- (b) Contact with infected live poultry is the main source of risk insofar as human infection by avian influenza (AI) is concerned. Over the past decade or so, the Government and the local live poultry industry, as well as the Mainland inspection and quarantine authorities and the farms supplying Hong Kong, have collaboratively built up a resilient and stringent system for the surveillance and control of AI, for the purpose of reducing the AI risks in Hong Kong. To mitigate the AI risks, the local live poultry trade has put in a lot of efforts and resources to ensure that the farms comply with all the biosecurity measures, whilst the Government has also invested a lot of public resources in the inspection and testing of imported and local live poultry, as well as the surveillance and biosecurity measures adopted in the supply chain of live poultry. The Mainland inspection and quarantine authorities and the farms supplying Hong Kong have also made significant efforts to ensure the safety of live poultry supplying Hong Kong. However, no surveillance system can attain zero risk. Occasionally we would still encounter AI cases, which may pose threat to public health, exert impacts on the community including the poultry trade and bring anxiety and worries to the citizens, at a considerable cost to society on the whole. On public health grounds, we should consider whether Hong Kong, being a place with scarce land resources and a densely populated city, should continue with the practice enabling close contact between human and poultry. In many developed cities like Hong Kong, there is generally no longer any selling of live poultry. And in Hong Kong, we have also observed a change in the eating habit of the ordinary citizens in that there has been a growing consumption of chilled and frozen poultry on the whole. We believe it is time for the Government, the poultry trade and the citizens to reflect whether the

selling of live poultry in Hong Kong remains appropriate in the long run. The Government would consider engaging a consultant to study and make recommendation in this regard.

A subject team in the Food and Health Bureau comprising a Principal Assistant Secretary and an Assistant Secretary, who are also tasked with other duties, oversees the policies in relation to the prevention and control of AI and the supply of poultry for food consumption. There is no separate breakdown of the expenditure for this area of work.