

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY**

**FHB(FE)265**

**(Question Serial No. 5244)**

Head: (49) Food and Environmental Hygiene Department  
Subhead (No. & title): (000) Operational expenses  
Programme: Not Specified  
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 258 (if applicable)

Question (Member Question No. 20):

Please advise on the Department's estimated expenditure on Mainland duty visits or exchange activities for 2014-15, the purposes of the Mainland duty visits or exchange activities planned for 2014-15, as well as the ways to avoid non-official elements in duty visits outside Hong Kong and prevent applications for revising destinations of visits from becoming a mere formality.

Asked by: Hon. WONG Yuk-man

Reply:

Officers of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department will, having regard to operational needs, undertake duty visits, including inspections, exchange programmes and meetings in the Mainland to promote cooperation on food safety and public health issues. It is estimated that the expenditure on duty visits to the Mainland in 2014-15 will be about \$2.2 million.

Duty visits, if publicly funded, are subject to control under relevant regulations and guidelines to ensure effective monitoring and proper use of public funds. There is control on various aspects, such as duty visits should only be conducted when there are strong operational reasons; formal prior approval is required for all duty visits and non-official activities should be avoided; the officers concerned should provide all necessary information in respect of the proposed visit as far as possible when submitting the application; if there are any subsequent changes to the arrangements, the officers concerned should inform the approving officers as soon as possible who should then assess whether re-consideration of the application is needed.