

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY**

**(Question Serial No. 0992)**

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:

Regarding the wholesale of live cattle, please advise on the following:

- (a) the total number, the average daily number, as well as the highest and lowest daily wholesale number of live cattle supplied to Hong Kong in each of the past four years (i.e. from 2011-12 to 2014-15);
- (b) the monthly average, highest and lowest price of live cattle supplied to Hong Kong in each of the past four years (i.e. from 2011-12 to 2014-15);
- (c) the total expenditure and average expenditure per head of cattle by the Government in handling live cattle (such as the arrangements for slaughterhouses, quarantine management, etc), as well as the manpower involved; and
- (d) the expenditure and manpower involved in setting up a joint working group with the Mainland last year to conduct surveys and studies on the supply of live cattle to Hong Kong, as well as the progress of the work.

Asked by: Hon HO Chun-yin, Steven (Member Question No. 9)

Reply:

- (a) Information on the number of live cattle admitted to the slaughterhouse in the past four years is tabulated as follows –

Year	Total number of live cattle admitted	Daily number of live cattle admitted		
		Average	Highest	Lowest
2011	28 718	79	172	18
2012	26 032	71	161	12
2013	19 156	52	116	8
2014	18 602	51	110	9

- (b) Information on the monthly wholesale prices of live cattle imported from the Mainland in the past four years is tabulated as follows –

Year	Monthly wholesale prices per picul of live cattle imported from the Mainland (HK\$)					
	Marbled Meat Cattle			Beef Cattle		
	Average	Highest	Lowest	Average	Highest	Lowest
2011	2,871	3,110	2,685	2,533	2,790	2,325
2012	3,601	4,310	3,110	3,291	4,105	2,790
2013	4,497	4,690	4,310	4,093	4,105	4,070
2014	4,690	4,690	4,690	4,070	4,070	4,070

- (c) The expenditure spent on live food animal inspection in the slaughterhouses in 2011-12, 2012-13 and 2013-14 was \$24.9 million, \$27.7 million and \$30.3 million respectively and the revised estimate in 2014-15 is \$33.3 million, involving 85 staff posts in each of these four years. Pigs, cattle and goats are slaughtered in the slaughterhouses. The average expenditure of live animal inspection on each live food animal slaughtered is respectively \$15.6, \$16.6, \$17.8 and \$19.2 (based on the revised estimate) in the same period. The cost for handling live cattle cannot be separately identified.
- (d) In view of the concerns articulated in the community about the supply and price of fresh beef, the Food and Health Bureau (FHB) commissioned in early 2013 a consultant to conduct a market survey. The results of the market survey were reported to the Legislative Council Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene (the FSEH Panel) on 28 May 2013 (please refer to LC Paper No. CB(2) 1182/12-13(04)). In parallel, FHB approached the Ministry of Commerce (MoC) to explore whether there would be a need to reform the existing system for the supply of live cattle to Hong Kong.

The progress of our deliberations with MoC was reported to FSEH Panel on 10 June 2014 (please refer to LC Paper No. (CB (2) 1676/13-14 (03)). At that time, there was a shortage of beef supply in the Mainland market itself. Recognising that it would take time for the Central Government's development plan for beef production to realise the effect of stabilising the supply of live cattle, MoC and FHB considered it more appropriate to examine at a future date the suggestion of opening up the live cattle market in Hong Kong. The Government would continue to closely monitor the situation.

Policy matters relating to food safety, import control, and supply of live cattle are overseen and handled by a team in FHB comprising a Principal Assistant Secretary and an Assistant Secretary. These officers are also tasked with other duties. Separate breakdown on the expenditure and manpower resources spent on this area of work is not available.