

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

FHB(FE)165

(Question Serial No. 2620)

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:

It is stated that the Department will "take action to close public markets which are under-utilised". In this connection, please provide information on the following:

- (1) the criteria adopted by the Department in determining the closure of the markets; whether the Department has any plan regarding the uses of the vacant markets upon their closure; and
- (2) the number of markets that were closed in the past ten years; among them, the number of markets which have been converted to other uses and the details.

Asked by: Hon WU Chi-wai (Member Question No. 15)

Reply:

The information sought is provided as follows -

- (1) Due to demographic changes, new development/redevelopment projects and competition from other fresh provision outlets, the appeal of some public markets has diminished thus leading to reduced patronage and high vacancy rates. When assessing the viability of such markets and considering whether they are to be closed, we will look into a host of factors, including its vacancy rate, prospects for improvement, availability of alternative sources of fresh provision outlets in the vicinity, the likely cost-effectiveness of upgrading works and the views of the relevant district councils, etc. The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department will consult the relevant District Council(s) and the affected market tenants on the possibility of closing down an under-utilised market if practical revitalisation measure could not be identified to keep the market on a viable footing. Where a market is closed and the premises is no longer required by the Department, the vacated building space will be handled according to established procedures. The Government Property Agency may be requested to assist in identifying other government departments to put the premises to gainful long-term use. If the premises is by itself a stand-alone building, the

Planning Department or the Lands Department may be involved in exploring the long term alternative use of the premises.

- (2) Five markets (namely, the Kimberley Street Market, Soy Street Temporary Cooked Food Market, Mong Kok Market, Kwong Choi Market and Bridges Street Market) were closed in the past ten years. All five sites were converted or designated for other uses. For instance, the site hitherto occupied by the Kimberly Street Market was converted to house the West Kowloon Office of the Immigration Department and Kowloon Births Registry, whereas the vacated Bridges Street Market has been included into the “Revitalising Historic Buildings Through Partnership Scheme” under which non-profit-making non-government organizations are invited to submit proposals to revitalize government owned historic buildings. The sites of the remaining three markets have been included in the land sale programme of the Lands Department.

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