

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

FHB(FE)133

(Question Serial No. 0656)

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:

Under Programme (3): Matters Requiring Special Attention in 2016-17, it is mentioned 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 public markets that were closed in the past three years; the reason(s) for their closure; the new land uses after their closure;
2. the public markets that will be closed in the coming three years; the reason(s) for their closure; the new land uses after their closure; and
3. the measures taken by the Department other than closing the markets to resolve the problem of the poor operation of public markets, as well as the expenditure involved in the past three years.

Asked by: Dr Hon Priscilla LEUNG Mei-fun (Member Question No. 29)

Reply:

To enhance the patronage of existing public markets, as an on-going initiative, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (the Department) conducts promotional activities. These include thematic exhibitions and workshops, festive celebration activities, display of multi-language recipes as well as publication of booklets and quarterly newsletters to provide updated market information. In addition, the Department will appropriately let out long-standing vacant stalls at reduced upset auction prices and introduce a greater variety of service trade stalls to enhance the occupancy rate of public markets.

In addition, the Government is following up the Consultant's improvement proposals for the six selected markets in phases. The Department consulted the Market Management Consultative Committees (MMCCs) of Sheung Fung Street Market and Lockhart Road Market in the fourth quarter of 2015 on the recommended improvement works. The MMCCs expressed support for proposals that do not require temporary closure of stalls or

suspension of business. The Department is carefully considering their views and will conduct feasibility studies, work out the estimated costs and seek funding according to the established mechanism for taking forward the improvement works at those two markets. We will start following up the Consultant's recommended improvements for the remaining four markets in 2016-2017.

Apart from the improvement works for the six markets selected by the consultant, we have been implementing various improvement works in public markets to improve the operating environment. In 2016-17, in addition to regular maintenance and daily management of markets, the Department will carry out improvement works in Fo Tan Cooked Food Market (East), Fo Tan Cooked Food Market (West), Kwun Chung Market, Haiphong Road Temporary Market, Pei Ho Street Market and Tsuen Wan Market. The estimated cost of these improvement works is \$68.5 million. The scope of works may include installation of a goods lift, improvement of ventilation, lighting systems and fire services, refurbishment of external walls, refurbishment of toilets, etc.

The expenditure involved in improvement projects completed and market promotional activities pursued in the past three years to enhance the operating environment of public markets is set out as follows -

Year	Expenditure on market improvement projects (\$ million)	Expenditure on market promotional activities (\$ million)
2013-14	22.2	4
2014-15	9.5	4
2015-16 (Revised estimate)	11.2	4

Nonetheless, as a result of demographic changes, new development/redevelopment projects and competition from other fresh provision outlets, the appeal of some public markets has been diminishing over time thus leading to reduced patronage and high vacancy rates. When considering whether a under-utilized public market is to be closed, we take into account a host of factors, including vacancy rate, prospects for improvement, availability of alternative sources of fresh provision outlets in the vicinity, and the likely cost-effectiveness of upgrading works and the views of the relevant District Councils, etc. Where a market is closed and the premises is no longer required by the Department, the vacated premises will be handled according to established procedures including seeking inputs from other Bureaux/Departments on proposals to put the premises to gainful long-term use.

In the past three years, one market, viz. Bridges Street Market (the Market) was closed due to consistently high vacancy rate. The Market has been included in the "Revitalising Historic Buildings Through Partnership Scheme" under which non-profit-making non-government organisations are invited to submit proposals to revitalize government owned historic buildings. The Market has been taken up by the Journalism Education Foundation Hong Kong Limited and will be used as the Hong Kong News-Expo, which is an exhibition-cum-education facility with news as the main theme.

Looking ahead, we shall continue to work with relevant Bureaux/Departments and District Councils to identify public markets that may be closed.

