

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

FHB(FE)173

(Question Serial No. 1297)

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

Question:

The Department is planning to introduce new measures in the first quarter this year, thereby imposing new conditions to regulate online sale of food by premises with food business licences or permits, as well as issuing a new set of permits for application by operators selling restricted foods online. In this connection, please advise on the following:

- (1) given that the 2016 estimates for the indicators “applications for food business licences” and “applications for restricted food permits” increase only slightly as compared with 2015, the distribution of manpower for continuing to take stringent enforcement actions and for implementing the new permit system and conducting inspections; whether additional manpower will be allocated to cope with the work of issuing permits, processing applications and conducting inspections in respect of online food sale; if yes, the number of additional staff, the establishment and the expenditure involved; if not, the reason(s); and
- (2) whether additional resources will be allocated to strengthen public education and publicity on online food safety; if yes, the expenditure and manpower involved; if not, the reason(s).

Asked by: Hon Tony TSE Wai-chuen (Member Question No. 15)

Reply:

- (1) Starting from 22 February 2016, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (the Department) accepts applications for the newly introduced online sale of restricted food permits (online sale permits). In this connection, the three licensing offices (LOs) of the Department responsible for processing applications for food business licences and other trade licences are tasked to process applications of the new online sale permits. The 19 district environmental hygiene offices (DEHOs) of the Department are tasked to monitor the licensed and permitted premises through inspections and enforcement actions. The workload involved in handling the applications for online sale permits and monitoring these permitted premises is

absorbed by the existing manpower of LOs and DEHOs. There is no separate breakdown on the manpower and expenditure involved in handling these applications and conducting inspections in respect of online food sale. The Department will review the workload and manpower requirement from time to time.

- (2) The Department has allocated funding to enhance publicity and public education on issues related to food safety and environmental hygiene through different channels and social media. For instance, to enhance public awareness of the safety of purchasing food online, an Announcement in the Public Interest (API) has been broadcast since end December 2015 to draw consumers' attention to food safety, with emphasis on the importance of temperature control, source of supply and proper mode of delivery in particular for high risk food items. Another television API to remind the trade of the need to obtain licences / permits for selling restricted food online and advise consumers to verify the licence / permit information on the Department's website is under preparation and will be broadcast in Q2 of 2016. The radio API on this issue has been broadcast since February 2016. There is no separate breakdown on the manpower and expenditure involved in the public education and publicity work relating to the new online permits.

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