

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

FHB(FE)312

(Question Serial No. 5876)

Head: (49) Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

Subhead: (-) 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:

Please advise whether the Department will conduct studies on building new public markets at suitable locations in the territory in 2016-17; if yes, the details and expenditure in this respect.

Asked by: Dr Hon KWOK Ka-ki (Member Question No.85)

Reply:

The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) currently manages 101 public markets, including 76 public markets which mainly sell fresh provisions and other dry and wet goods, as well as 25 free-standing cooked food markets.

The prevailing Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines with respect to the planning of public markets stipulate the relevant factors to be taken into consideration, including the population of the area (including the demographic mix), community needs, the provision of public and private market facilities nearby, the number of fresh provision retail outlets in the vicinity and the public sentiment towards the preservation of hawker areas. This approach is based on a holistic consideration of all relevant factors in the planning of public markets.

Our focus is on facilitating convenient access on the part of the public to retail outlets in their neighbourhood for meeting their daily needs on food and other necessities. Currently, there exists a variety of channels for the public to purchase fresh food. Apart from public markets, many members of the public when purchasing fresh food may choose to patronise markets, supermarkets and various types of retail outlets operated by other public and private entities. Customer preference for different shopping venues in purchasing fresh food may evolve in tandem with changes in socio-economic circumstances, lifestyles, purchasing power and various other factors.

Providing a new public market requires the use of Government land and entails public financial commitment. Therefore, in considering whether a public market should be built,

we have to duly assess the need for the market and cost effectiveness in order to ensure that public resources are put to proper use. In fact, in the face of fierce competition and changing circumstances in individual communities, some public markets are facing relatively high vacancy rates and low customer flows. Also, the Audit Commission had in previous reports pointed out that, given the high cost of constructing a new public market, the relevant principles should be strictly adhered to.

In considering whether new public markets should be provided in individual districts, we would take into account all relevant factors, including the abovementioned planning standards and guidelines, the actual situation of individual districts and the views of stakeholders, to ensure that public resources are put to proper use.

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