

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

FHB(FE)094

(Question Serial No. 1315)

Head: (49) Food and Environmental Hygiene Department
Subhead (No. & title): (000) Operational expenses
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:

The downward trend of the number of fixed pitch hawkers and itinerant hawkers in recent years has limited people's shopping choices and the development of the community. Apart from the assistance scheme for hawker licensees, what other measures are in place to support hawkers?

Asked by: Hon CHENG Chung-tai (Member Question No. 16)

Reply:

The Finance Committee of the Legislative Council approved in March 2013 a financial commitment of \$230 million for launching a five-year Hawker Assistance Scheme for some 4 300 licensed fixed-pitch hawkers operating in 43 hawker areas (the Scheme). The Scheme, which commenced on 3 June 2013, aims to provide one-off financial assistance to hawkers in the hawker areas for stall reconstruction and relocation in order to expedite the work of reducing fire risks in those areas. Besides, an ex-gratia payment is offered under the Scheme for voluntary surrender of hawker licences. This would help expedite the release of vacant pitches and facilitate the relocation of stalls which pose higher fire risks. In the course of administering the Scheme, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (the Department) would also endeavour to identify areas which could bring about enhancement to the hawking environment in the hawker areas. This includes rationalising the overall layout of hawker stalls where circumstances permit, and enhancing electrical safety.

We note that most merchandise sold in hawker areas is imported or made in bulk and are available also in other retail outlets. Nevertheless, we accept that hawker areas may add to the character of a community and shall therefore consider re-issuing new hawker licences to fill any vacant pitches in some hawker areas. In doing so, we must draw a balance between developing hawker areas and other no less important concerns related to the circumstances of individual hawker areas, including their fire safety and environmental hygiene situations, the business environment, comments of relevant departments, as well as the views of the relevant District Council and local residents.

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