

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

FHB(FE)174

(Question Serial No. 1216)

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:

During 2017-18, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department will take action to close public markets which are under-utilised. In this connection, please provide information on the following:

1. the locations of the public markets concerned and their respective utilisation rates; and
2. whether the Department has reviewed the reason(s) for the low utilisation rates of those markets and made attempts to improve the situation; if yes, the details, if not, the reason(s).

Asked by: Hon SHIU Ka-fai (Member Question No. 28)

Reply:

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 an under-utilised public market is to be closed, we will 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. The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (the Department) plans to close Shau Kei Wan Market and Tsuen King Circuit Market in 2017-18, the vacancy rates¹ of which were 44% and 80% respectively as at 31 December 2016. Noteworthy is that a sizable portion of the occupied (i.e. leased) stalls are not in active operation, e.g. for the Shau Kei Wan Market, of the 46 occupied stalls, only 19 stalls are actively in operation.

¹ Vacancy rate is the percentage of stalls not leased versus the total number of stalls in a market.

As an on-going initiative, the Department has been taking forward measures to improve the operating environment of public markets, including replacement of aged lifts and escalators, improvement of ventilation, lighting systems and fire services, refurbishment of external walls, refurbishment of toilets, etc. as appropriate. Promotional activities are also conducted to enhance the patronage of public markets. 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 continue, as appropriate, to 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.

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