

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY**

**FHB(FE)385**

**(Question Serial No. 5238)**

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:

Over the past few years, the Department stated that it would close public markets which were under-utilised. Given the indication by the Department that the same actions will be taken in 2019-20, please advise this Committee on:

1. the number of public markets closed in the past 5 years as a result of under-utilisation;
2. the public markets which the Department is planning to close this year (including their names, locations and occupancy rates set out in tabular form); and
3. the measures to improve the occupancy rate of market stalls.

Asked by: Hon KWOK Ka-ki (LegCo internal reference no.: 300)

Reply:

1. As promulgated in the 2018 Policy Address, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (the Department) is conducting a comprehensive review of the usage and development potential of existing markets, with a view to formulating appropriate development plans for fulfilment of policy objectives of optimising land uses, benefitting the public and promoting district development.

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, with some having very low patronage and high vacancy rates. Closure of such markets will release precious land resources for more gainful uses to better serve the community. When considering whether an under-utilised market is to be closed, the Department will take into account a host of factors, including the vacancy rate, prospects for improvement, availability of alternative fresh provision outlets in the vicinity, the likely cost-effectiveness of upgrading works and the views of the relevant District Councils, etc. The Department will consult the

relevant District Council(s) and the market tenants to be affected on any market closure plans.

In the past 5 years ending 31 March 2019, 3 markets, namely Shau Kei Wan Market, Tsuen King Circuit Market and Tai Yuen Street Cooked Food Market were closed due to consistently high vacancy rates.

2. In 2019-20, the Department plans to close Cheung Sha Wan Cooked Food Market in Sham Shui Po and Tui Min Hoi Market in Sai Kung. Their occupancy rates were 39% and 56% respectively as at 31 December 2018.
3. 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 festive celebration and thematic activities, display of multi-language recipes as well as publication of booklets which provide updated market information.

At the same time, the Department will step up enforcement against sitting tenants for inactive operation or unauthorised change of the use of stalls.

A dedicated team has been set up in the Department to draw up and implement the Market Modernisation Programme to modernise, revitalise and consolidate existing public markets as appropriate and undertake management reviews to improve the overall viability of the markets.

- End -