

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY**FHB(FE)132****(Question Serial No. 0025)**

Head: (49) Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not specified

Programme: (1) Food Safety and Public Health

Controlling Officer: Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene (Miss Vivian LAU)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Food and Health

Question:

It is stated in the Matters Requiring Special Attention in 2020-21 under Programme (1), that the Department will continue to follow up proactively the recommendations in the Audit Reports released in November 2018 and the Public Accounts Committee reports concerned to strengthen the functions of the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) in food safety management and food import control. And as indicated in controlling officer's reply last year, a task group has been set up to take forward the recommendations, specifically conducting a comprehensive review on several issues. In this regard, please advise this Committee:

1. of the funding allocated to CFS in each of the past 5 years and in 2020-21, whether additional resources will be deployed;
2. of the latest progress of the review, and of specific measures have been adopted to enhance food safety management and food import control last year;
3. of the work plan of the task group this year, and whether any new measures will be adopted in this regard.

Asked by: Hon SHEK Lai-him, Abraham (LegCo internal reference no.: 20)

Reply:

1. The expenditure of the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department from 2015-16 to 2020-21 is set out as follows:

Financial year	Expenditure (\$ million)
2015-16	504
2016-17	551
2017-18	592
2018-19	660
2019-20 (revised estimate)	723
2020-21 (estimate)	772

2.&3. In 2019, CFS set up a task group led by the Controller, CFS, to take forward the recommendations of the Audit Commission (Audit) and the Legislative Council (LegCo) Public Accounts Committee (PAC) concerning its work in food safety management and import control. The task group has completed its comprehensive reviews on CFS's operational manuals and guidelines, staff management and supervision arrangements, training requirements, and manpower and resource requirements. CFS has rolled out concrete and effective short, medium and long-term measures to enhance its effectiveness by phases, including updating its guidelines where there were inadequacies or ambiguities and introducing a mechanism for regular updates, enhancing training and supervision of frontline staff, strengthening staff's law enforcement mindset and the keeping of data and records. The specific measures taken and their implementation were set out in the Government minutes submitted to LegCo in May and December 2019.

In addition, CFS set up a dedicated team in end 2017 to look closely at its operational workflow, revamp its information technology (IT) systems for higher efficiency, and enhance its mode of operation through IT to support the work of its frontline staff and reinforce its capability in food import control, surveillance, incident management, risk assessment and traceability. CFS also launched the Food Trader Portal (FTP) in stages at the end of 2019 as a platform for electronic communication with the trade. Through the FTP, food traders can complete registration as importers or distributors by electronic means. In the first quarter of 2020, CFS further introduced an online service to facilitate food traders to apply online for import licences and import permission in respect of meat, poultry and game.

In 2020-21, CFS will continue to implement specific measures to follow up on the recommendations of Audit and PAC and enhance its IT systems in an order of priorities to safeguard food safety.

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