

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

FHB(FE)135

(Question Serial No. 2385)

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:

In 2020-21, the Department will continue to follow up proactively on 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 in food safety management and food import control. What is the timetable for implementing the recommendations? Will additional manpower and expenditure be required? If yes, what are the details?

Asked by: Hon SHIU Ka-fai (LegCo internal reference no.: 30)

Reply:

In 2019, the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department 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 of 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. The estimated expenditure of CFS in 2020-21 is about \$49 million more than the revised estimate for 2019-20. This includes the expenditure incurred for the creation of 15 additional civil service posts to enhance the safeguard of food safety.

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