

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

FHB(FE)326

(Question Serial No. 4995)

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:

The Department stated last year that it would close public markets which were under-utilised. Given the indication by the Department that the same actions will be taken in the coming year, please advise this Committee on:

1. the number of public markets closed last year as a result of under-utilisation;
2. the public markets which the Department is planning to close (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.: 818)

Reply:

The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department is conducting a comprehensive review of the usage and development potential of existing markets, with a view to formulating appropriate development plans for meeting the policy objectives of optimising land uses, benefitting the public and promoting district development. With 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 low patronage and high vacancy rates. Closing such markets may release precious land resources for more gainful uses to better serve the community. When considering whether a market is to be closed, the Department will take into account a host of factors, including the vacancy rate of the market, prospects for improvement, availability of alternative fresh provision outlets in the vicinity, the cost-effectiveness that may be brought by the upgrading works and the views of the relevant District Councils, etc. When drawing up closure plans for markets, the Department will consult the District Councils and affected market tenants.

1. In 2019-20, the Department closed Cheung Sha Wan Cooked Food Market due to high vacancy rate.

2. The Department plans to close Tui Min Hoi Market in 2020-21. As at 31 December 2019, there were 19 stalls let out in the market, and the occupancy rate was about 56%. The Department will continue to review the usage and development potential of other markets, and tentatively plans to take forward the preparatory and consultation work for closure of another 4 markets. Views from other government departments have been sought in accordance with established procedures to formulate proposals for putting the premises concerned to gainful long-term uses.
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 service equipment, refurbishment of external walls and toilets, etc. as appropriate. The Department also conducts promotional activities to enhance the patronage of public markets, including 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.

The Department has set up a dedicated team to develop new markets and take forward the Market Modernisation Programme and other reviews, including the review of the usage of existing markets. The team is also reviewing the management of markets to improve their overall viability.

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