

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

FHB(FE)101

(Question Serial No. 3259)

Head: (49) Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

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

Programme: (2) Environmental Hygiene and Related Services

Controlling Officer: Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene (Miss Diane WONG)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Food and Health

Question:

1. How many applications for the Catering Business Subsidy Scheme (the Scheme) were received and approved in each of the four rounds of the Anti-epidemic Fund (the Fund) since 2020? What is the amount involved for each phase of the Scheme?
2. For successful applications for the subsidy, what is the average waiting time for issue of the first tranche of subsidy after an application is approved?
3. How many applications are still being processed?
4. How many applications are approved with subsidies remain to be granted? What is/are the reason(s) for that?

Asked by: Hon CHEUNG Kwok-kwan (LegCo internal reference no.: 21)

Reply:

The business of catering premises is hard hit by the COVID-19 epidemic. In view of this, the Government has launched 4 rounds of subsidy schemes for the catering sector under the Anti-epidemic Fund (AEF) since February 2020 to provide instant financial relief for the trade. As at 31 March 2021, the total amount of subsidies disbursed was about \$12.5 billion. The financial impact of the measures will be absorbed by the AEF, which does not form part of the Appropriation Bill or the estimates on the General Revenue Account.

The Food Licence Holders Subsidy Scheme launched by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department under the first round of the AEF was completed with 29 097 applications received. All applications were processed and 28 551 applications were approved. The subsidies for all approved cases, amounting to around \$3.7 billion, were disbursed.

The Catering Business (Social Distancing) Subsidy Scheme rolled out under the second round of the AEF was to disburse subsidies, in two tranches, to catering premises providing dine-in services. The scheme mainly seeks to assist the applicants in paying the salaries of their staff from May to July 2020 and from August to October 2020. Upon receiving the first tranche of the subsidy, the applicant had to submit, within the specified time frame,

documents certifying that there was no staff redundancy from May to July 2020 and that not less than 80% of the subsidies released was used to pay salaries of staff in order to receive the second tranche of subsidy. A total of 20 146 applications were received and 19 161 applications were approved. The first tranche of subsidy, involving around \$2.3 billion, was fully disbursed. As for the second tranche of subsidy, 639 cases were pending processing as at 31 March 2021. The approved applications were mostly granted with subsidies, which involved around \$2.1 billion.

Regarding the Catering Business Subsidy Scheme (CBSS) under the third round of the AEF, 16 379 applications were received as at 31 March 2021, with 15 998 applications approved and 12 under processing. The approved applications were mostly granted with subsidies, which involved around \$1.4 billion.

As for the CBSS (subsidies disbursed in two tranches) and the Food Courts Subsidy Scheme under the fourth round of the AEF, the application periods ended on 28 January 2021 and 31 March 2021 respectively. As at 31 March 2021, a total of 34 508 applications were received, of which 32 115 applications have been approved and 1 501 applications are still being processed. The approved applications were mostly granted with subsidies, which involved around \$3.0 billion.

For most of the successful cases under the 4 rounds of the AEF, the average time from granting of approval to the issue of subsidy is around 4 to 7 working days.

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