

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

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(Question Serial No. 0809)

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 (Ms Irene YOUNG)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Environment and Ecology

Question:

The target for the letting percentage of public markets is raised from the actual 86% in 2022 to 90% in 2023. What is the number and percentage of stalls set aside for designated purposes? What is the specific plan of the Department to increase the letting percentage? Regarding the enhancement of facilities and management of public markets, which includes carrying out improvement works and market promotional activities on a continuous basis, what is the expenditure and manpower involved? Please provide the details. How are the performance indicators for these measures set?

Asked by: Hon CHEUNG Yu-yan, Tommy (LegCo internal reference no.: 4)

Reply:

As at 31 December 2022, 11 604 out of the 13 454 stalls in 96 public markets were let out, representing a letting percentage of about 86.2%. Meanwhile, 1 137 stalls (or about 8.5% of the total number of stalls) had been set aside for designated purposes, including reprovisioning stall tenants affected by market improvement works.

To increase the letting percentage, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department has put vacant stalls up for open auction on a number of occasions since June 2021. In the last three rounds of open auction held in August 2022, December 2022 and February 2023, a total of 567 stalls have been successfully let out. The Department will continue to put suitable vacant market stalls up for open auction in the future.

The Department has been taking forward measures to improve the operating environment of existing public markets, including improvement of ventilation, lighting systems and fire service equipment, refurbishment of external walls and toilets, etc. The estimated expenditure for the works to be carried out/ planned to be carried out in 2023-24 is about \$101 million.

To ensure the smooth operation of lifts and escalators in public markets, the Department has started replacing the aged lifts and escalators in phases since 2015-16. To date, we have earmarked about \$558 million for the replacement of 71 lifts and 163 escalators in 37 public

markets. The replacement works of 52 lifts and 127 escalators have been completed, while the remaining works will be gradually completed as planned.

Besides, the Department is pressing ahead with the minor refurbishment or improvement works under the Market Modernisation Programme (MMP) to upgrade market facilities as soon as possible. Out of the 16 markets currently covered, the works in 14 markets have been completed, while the works or relevant preparatory works for the remaining 2 markets are underway, with completion expected in 2023 and in phases in 2024 respectively. Depending on the circumstances, the scope of minor refurbishment or improvement works generally includes renovation of internal facilities, beautification of external walls, replacement of floor tiles, repainting, repairing facilities, refurbishing the toilets, maintenance of drainage systems and piping, as well as installation of rodent-proof devices, etc. The project estimates for taking forward the 16 afore-mentioned minor refurbishment or improvement works are about \$86 million in total.

To enhance the patronage and business vibrancy of public markets, the Department carries out promotional programmes such as festive and thematic promotions in existing public markets on an ongoing basis. Publicity and promotional programmes not only add to the festive atmosphere of public markets, but are also conducive to enhancing the patronage of markets and stimulating spending. The Department will provide information about market development projects through social media, such as the Facebook page of Keep Clean Ambassador Ah Tak, to let people know more about public markets and enhance patronage. Besides, we will work with service contractors to carry out corresponding publicity and promotional work for overhauled/redeveloped markets and new markets, such as producing a series of publicity materials and documenting the changes in the markets before and after the overhaul.

The expenditure on publicity and promotional activities of public markets in 2022-23 was about \$5.89 million, which included the expenses incurred by the outsourced service contractors and the Department for manpower deployment and organisation of publicity and promotional activities. The expenditure was mainly used on decorating the markets, producing souvenirs and holding a variety of promotional activities.

The afore-mentioned improvement works and the enhanced market management and promotion work are performed by the staff responsible for the daily management of public markets, while the Market Development Division is responsible for the MMP. The Department does not keep a breakdown of the relevant manpower figures.

The Department will closely monitor the changes in patronage and letting percentage of each public market, so as to evaluate the effectiveness of improvement works and market promotional activities, as well as to conduct reviews in a timely manner.

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