

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

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(Question Serial No. 3497)

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 (Ms Irene YOUNG)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Environment and Ecology

Question:

As regards taking forward the streamlining of the food licensing regime, please advise this Committee of the following:

- (a) What are the latest numbers of applications received and approved, and the average reduction in the licence processing time under the new Professional Certification System?
- (b) Can the Government achieve savings under the new system?

Asked by: Hon HO Chun-yin, Steven (LegCo internal reference no.: 68)

Reply:

- (a) In order to expedite the processing procedures and enable the trade to have a better grasp of the time needed to acquire a full licence, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department introduced on 1 March 2023 a Professional Certification System (PCS) for light refreshment restaurant and food factory licences on a pilot basis as an additional option on top of the existing regime. Since 1 February 2024, the scope of the PCS has been expanded to cover general restaurant licence. From 1 March 2023 to 31 March 2024, there were 12 cases where the applicants opted for the PCS, and 7 have been approved to date. Under the PCS, an applicant could receive a full licence 13 working days earlier as compared to the existing licensing regime.
- (b) The PCS aims to facilitate business operation by helping applicants obtain the full licences as soon as possible. Under the PCS, the Department's staff are still required to conduct on-site audit checks to the food premises after the applicants are issued with the full licences. Therefore, whether the applicants opt for the PCS or not basically have no bearing on the Department's expenditure.

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