

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

EEB(F)162

(Question Serial No. 3744)

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:

Please provide in detail the following information relating to the processing of applications for food business-related licences by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department:

1. the numbers of new applications and renewal applications in each of the past 5 years, with a breakdown by licence type (restaurant licence, bakery licence, cold store licence, factory canteen licence, food factory licence, temporary food factory licence, fresh provision shop licence, frozen confection factory licence, milk factory licence, siu mei and lo mei shop licence, etc.);
2. the average processing time as well as the longest and shortest processing time for an application in each of the past 5 years, with a breakdown by licence type;
3. the staff establishment and expenditure for processing each type of licences in each of the past 5 years, with a breakdown by rank;
4. the number of outstanding cases at the end of each of the past 5 years, with a breakdown by licence type;
5. the number of complaints received relating to the processing procedures for each type of licences in each of the past 5 years, with a breakdown by nature of/reason for complaints;
6. the total administrative expenditure (including manpower, system and other expenditure) incurred in processing each type of licences in each of the past 5 years;
7. the estimated requirements for staffing and administrative expenditure for processing various licence applications in the next 5 years, based on the data trend of the past 5 years;
8. the types of electronic licence application and processing systems currently in place, as well as the electronisation level as compared with that of 5 years ago; and
9. the total amount of licence fees the Department charged various types of food business operators, and whether there was any fee adjustment in each of the past 5 years, with a breakdown by type of food business operators.

Asked by: Hon TIK Chi-yuen (LegCo internal reference no.: 490)

Reply:

1. The information sought is provided as follows:

Type of licence and number of applications		Type of application	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Restaurant	General restaurant	New	1 350	1 153	1 458	1 077	953
		Renewal	10 686	10 854	11 270	11 549	12 006
	Light refreshment restaurant	New	507	451	543	380	484
		Renewal	3 654	3 753	3 837	3 922	4 032
	Marine restaurant	New	0	0	0	0	0
		Renewal	5	5	5	5	5
Bakery		New	28	30	28	15	25
		Renewal	571	559	539	506	477
Cold store		New	13	14	22	32	14
		Renewal	60	62	68	65	71
Factory canteen		New	54	36	34	33	24
		Renewal	475	476	466	477	475
Food factory		New	1 528	1 820	2 021	1 587	1 324
		Renewal	7 448	8 109	8 585	9 356	9 797
Temporary food factory		New	2 066	522	685	519	1 952
		Renewal ¹	N.A.				
Fresh provision shop		New	450	749	680	516	319
		Renewal	2 312	2 527	2 625	2 945	2 929
Frozen confection factory		New	76	39	43	38	56
		Renewal	464	482	478	457	435
Milk factory		New	0	0	0	0	0
		Renewal	8	8	8	8	8
Siu mei and lo mei shop		New	56	70	91	62	38
		Renewal	343	357	373	389	383
Composite food shop		New	0	1 ²	0	0	1 ²
		Renewal	3	3	2	2	1

¹ Renewal is not available for the temporary food factory licence.

² The applications were subsequently withdrawn by the applicants.

2. The information sought is provided as follows:

The processing time for a new application is contingent upon the applicant's compliance with the relevant licensing requirements, and whether there is any amendment concerning the application (such as layout plans) during the application process. It varies from case to case.

Type of licence and number of applications		Median processing time for an approved new application (working days)				
		2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Restaurant	General restaurant	202	202	193	195	191
	Light refreshment restaurant	208	208	195	205	194
Bakery		196	193	219	203	204

Type of licence and number of applications	Median processing time for an approved new application (working days)				
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Cold store	274	244	252	320	239
Factory canteen	507	341	357	383	304
Food factory	205	207	203	200	191
Temporary food factory	18	17	24	25	18
Fresh provision shop	188	179	199	187	174
Frozen confection factory	179	183	198	191	183
Siu mei and lo mei shop	227	193	211	204	206
Composite food shop	N.A. ³				

³ There were no new applications for the composite food shop licence to be processed in the past 5 years.

3. & 6. The numbers of staff responsible for processing applications for various licences (including food business and other trade licences) in the 3 licensing offices under the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department were 123, 126, 126, 133 and 134 in 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023 respectively. The expenditure of the offices is provided below:

	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24 (Revised estimate)
Expenditure (\$ million)	97.6	104.4	109.5	111.7	115.3

The Department does not keep a breakdown of the manpower and expenditure involved in the processing of applications for food business licences.

4. The numbers of outstanding applications for food business licences as at 31 March 2024 are set out below:

Type of licence and number of applications	Number of outstanding applications for food business licences	
Restaurant	General restaurant	713
	Light refreshment restaurant	362
	Marine restaurant	0
Bakery	15	
Cold store	11	
Factory canteen	40	
Food factory	980	
Temporary food factory	165	
Fresh provision shop	199	
Frozen confection factory	33	
Milk factory	0	
Siu mei and lo mei shop	33	
Composite food shop	0	

The Department does not keep any statistics on the outstanding applications for food business licences as at the end of each year.

5. A breakdown of the number of complaints received relating to the processing of food business licences is provided below. The Department does not keep a further breakdown of the figures.

Number of complaints	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Number of complaints received relating to the processing of food business licences	9	1	11	9	12

7. The Department's estimated expenditure on handling matters relating to various licences in 2024-25 is \$117.8 million. The Department does not have information on the estimated expenditure for 2025-30.
8. In 2006, the Department rolled out the Licensing Management Information System (LMIS) to process applications for food business and other trade licences. Since 2013, electronic application services, covering e-submission of applications, e-tracking of application status and online payment of licence fees, have been made available to the applicants progressively. In 2023, LMIS was upgraded to increase the operational efficiency of the licensing process. It is planned that various licences, including food business licences, will be issued through electronic means in mid-2024.
9. The information sought is provided as follows⁴:

Type of licence		2019-20 (\$'000)	2020-21 (\$'000)	2021-22 (\$'000)	2022-23 (\$'000)	2023-24 (as at 29 February 2024) (\$'000)
Restaurant	General restaurant and marine restaurant ⁵	46,109.8	1,272.4	1,361.2	1,525.8	32,636.3
	Light refreshment restaurant	4,856.3	187.9	237.7	241.3	4,114.0
Bakery		526.5	16.5	16.4	10.4	1,244.8
Cold store		1,179.4	6.1	0.6	127.8	5,588.4
Factory canteen		1,501.4	30.2	12.8	17.5	1,126.4
Food factory		21,610.4	1,030.5	1,343.6	1,587.2	35,109.8
Temporary food factory		555.1	154.2	296.8	305.6	738.3
Fresh provision shop		9,986.0	613.2	1,111.0	1,055.2	15,687.4
Frozen confection factory		952.5	32.2	16.4	33.2	1,280.5
Milk factory		93.7	-	-	0.1	402.5
Siu mei and lo mei shop		508.1	21.5	29.7	40.0	510.8
Composite food shop		8.9	-	0.1	0.1	-

- ⁴ From 1 October 2019 to 30 September 2023, the Government waived the fees for the first issue or renewal of food business licences (excluding temporary food factory licences). In the past 5 years, there was no adjustment to food business licence and other related fees.
- ⁵ The Department does not keep a breakdown of the licence fees it charged general restaurants and marine restaurants.

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