

**For discussion on
19 October 2021**

ACFEH Paper 5/2021

Advisory Council on Food and Environmental Hygiene

**Policy Address Initiatives relating to
Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene**

Purpose

This paper briefs members on the new initiatives and the on-going initiatives relating to food safety and environmental hygiene as announced in the 2021 Policy Address.

Food Safety

2. Ensuring food safety has always been one of our major priorities. Following the public consultation on strengthening regulation of harmful substances in food (including industrially-produced trans fats and mycotoxins) launched last year, we introduced the relevant legislative amendments to the Legislative Council (LegCo) in June this year. The legislative amendments, which were passed smoothly, will be implemented in two phases in June and December 2023 after the grace period. As the next step, in view of the public concern over veterinary drug residues in food, we will conduct a comprehensive review on the standards of veterinary drug residues in food under the Harmful Substances in Food Regulations (Cap. 132AF), as well as the relevant prevailing legislation and regulatory arrangements. We plan to complete the review within next year and thereafter devise arrangements to implement the relevant regulatory proposals for further ensuring food safety.

3. In addition, to further protect the nutrition and health of infants and young children below the age of 36 months, we will review the regulation of nutrition composition and the related labelling requirements of formula products for infants and young children to ensure their proper composition. We will also review the regulatory arrangement on the nutrition and health claims of these products so as to avoid parents choosing to feed their infants

and young children with formula products under the influence of these claims. When conducting the review, we will make reference to the latest international development and practices.

Environmental Hygiene

4. The territory-wide mosquito surveillance index during the rainy season this year was at a relatively low level similar to the levels of the past years. As at September this year, there was no local dengue fever case in Hong Kong. The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) will actively research and apply new technologies and equipment to further enhance the effectiveness of its anti-mosquito work. FEHD and the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department (EMSD) are testing a large robotics ultra-low volume fogger. It can be installed on vehicles, and the range of the sprayer is wider than that of the knapsack sprayer being used. This can facilitate the fogging operations in large areas and is particularly useful in killing adult mosquitoes in places that are difficult for workers to reach. FEHD has been conducting field trials in several districts since April this year. The initial feedback has been positive and FEHD is recommending other departments to adopt the technology.

5. As regards rodent control, the Housing Department (HD) and FEHD set up a Working Group co-chaired by their Deputy Directors in December 2020 to formulate and implement more effective rodent prevention and control measures in public rental housing estates. HD implemented more intensive rodent control measures in 20 priority estates from April to June this year, including conducting 46 joint inspections and 60 joint cleaning operations with FEHD or local stakeholders, and installing more rodent-proofing facilities, etc. HD also launched the second phase of the operation in August, implementing the relevant measures for stepping up rodent control efforts in 30 priority estates. Looking forward, it plans to step up rodent control efforts in another 30 priority estates early next year. To further enhance the effectiveness of the anti-rodent operations in designated target areas, FEHD will, in November this year, deploy additional resources, including deploying pest control roving teams, rear lane clearance teams and street washing vehicles to enhance pest control and rear lane cleaning

work, and taking stringent enforcement action against violation of public health legislation. Moreover, FEHD will make use of thermal cameras to detect rodent activities. Analysing the rodent traces detected at different stages of the operations will be helpful in devising an appropriate anti-rodent strategy. Besides, FEHD will carry out the enhanced version of the anti-rodent operations in designated target areas in three districts (Sham Shui Po, Wan Chai and Yuen Long), under which the scope of rodent control will be expanded; more rodent blackspots such as public markets and municipal services buildings, hawker bazaars, and rear lanes adjacent to food premises, etc. will be covered; and large-scale and targeted anti-rodent operations will be conducted. Relevant departments will make every effort to dovetail with the operations when needed to maximise the effectiveness.

6. FEHD has been actively implementing the Enhanced Public Toilet Refurbishment Programme (EPTRP) over the past two years, and has rolled out refurbishment or facelifting projects for more than 90 public toilets. The works for 50 public toilets have been completed so far, and refurbishment or facelifting projects will commence this year and next year for about 100 public toilets. By the end of 2023-24, FEHD will, in accordance with its plan, commence the refurbishment or facelifting projects for a total of around 240 public toilets. Apart from implementing the EPTRP, FEHD will also actively explore the utilisation of technologies to improve hygiene in public toilets and enhance service quality, including developing a “smart public toilet system” to collect daily operational data such as the usage of public toilets, environmental parameters and the usage of consumables, for reference in the review of service quality and management effectiveness. FEHD has piloted the system in the Tsim Sha Tsui East Public Transport Interchange Public Toilet and the Southorn Centre Public Toilet in Wan Chai since May 2021, and is now evaluating the performance and effectiveness of the system for review and follow-up in due course. Besides, FEHD is working with EMSD to consider making use of the Government-Wide Internet-of-Things Network to launch a “smart toilet pilot programme”. The relevant devices will be successively installed at 10 FEHD toilets over the territory from the third quarter of 2021 onwards to collect useful information and data for better efficacy of cleansing, housekeeping and maintenance.

Burial Policy

7. The Government is determined to take forward the burial policy under a three-pronged approach, namely, increasing the supply of public niches, regulating private columbaria, and promoting green burial.

8. In terms of increasing the supply of public niches, the most recently completed Tuen Mun Tsang Tsui Columbarium was commissioned in March this year, providing 160 000 niches. We continue to proactively press ahead the district-based columbarium development scheme. In July, we obtained funding approval from the Finance Committee to carry out site formation and associated infrastructural works for development of columbarium at Siu Ho Wan on Lantau Island. The Government will continue to identify suitable sites for the public columbaria use, and timely consult the District Councils on columbarium projects and seek funding approval from the LegCo. On improving the arrangements for handling abortuses, we are building a dedicated cremation facility for abortuses with a Garden of Remembrance at a site near the Kwai Chung Crematorium. The project is expected to be completed by the end of this year and commissioned in the first quarter next year.

9. Regarding the regulation of private columbaria, as at September 2021, the Private Columbaria Licensing Board (PCLB) has approved / agreed to approve in principle the specified instrument applications submitted by a total of 30 columbaria¹, involving sold niches which approximately account for 55% of the total sold niches of private columbaria in Hong Kong. On the other hand, the specified instrument applications submitted by 28 private columbaria have been refused due to non-compliance with the requirements. The PCLB will continue to process the applications² expeditiously as far as practicable. We will also continue to keep in view the implementation of

¹ In respect of the 30 columbaria, PCAB has issued a total of seven licences and one exemption, and agreed to approve in principle one application for licence, one application for exemption and 22 applications for temporary suspension of liability (TSOL).

² The PCLB set a target in May 2021 to make certain decisions on all applications for specified instruments made in respect of pre-cut-off columbaria (giving approval/“approval-in-principle” to or rejecting the applications for licence / exemption / TSOL) within two years.

the Private Columbaria Ordinance (Cap. 630) and consider how to improve the regulatory regime.

10. As for promotion of green burial, for the first eight months of 2021, there were 5 455 green burial cases, accounting for 15.7% of the total number of deaths. To further upgrade the quality and efficiency of green burial services to encourage more citizens to opt for green burial, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department plans to organize “design thinking” workshops to collect views and innovative ideas from the public and stakeholders. Centred on the needs of service users, it is to seek innovative and appropriate solutions to enhance green burial services.

Advice Sought

11. Members are invited to note this paper and provide comments.

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