

Government's Response to the Council for Sustainable Development's Report on Promotion of Sustainable Consumption of Biological Resources

INTRODUCTION

We rely on biological resources to support our daily life. For example, our food, clothing, furniture, etc. all originate from biological resources. However, the current over-consumption lifestyle prevalent in society is not sustainable in the long run. The Council for Sustainable Development (“SDC”) submitted a report to the Government on 2 June 2017, setting out 20 recommendations including the need to devise a long term strategy to induce behavioural change towards more sustainable consumption of biological resources. On the same day, the Environment Bureau issued a statement welcoming the report and pledged that the Government would study the SDC’s recommendations and give a detailed response. This note serves to provide the Government’s formal response.

AN OVERALL STRATEGY

2. The Government recognises the importance of putting in place a strategic instrument for drawing together different parties and building the necessary momentum in sustaining a societal transition towards more sustainable consumption behaviour in Hong Kong. Among other things, community involvement is the key to behavioural changes while knowledge is critical to the process of making choices or decisions. The Government’s overall strategy is to promote sustainable consumption of biological resources through “Community Engagement” and “Facilitating Access to Knowledge”. Necessary actions will be taken forward in the context of the Hong Kong Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan 2016 – 2021 (“BSAP”).

Building Awareness through Community Engagement

3. Our community’s consumption pattern has to undergo some kind of transformation for the well-being of the future generations. In particular, we need to rethink our behaviour or ways of living, e.g. what to buy and how to consume, as well as whether and how to integrate sustainability concerns into our everyday decision-making, in order to drive a fundamental change in the prevalent consumption culture. The Government will carry out a variety of awareness-building programmes targeting different stakeholders in society, and

strive to make sustainable consumption a more readily comprehensible and widely understood concept by conveying our messages in a simple and straightforward manner, thereby facilitating behavioural change. Detailed actions are discussed in the following paragraphs.

School programmes

4. Consumption behaviour and mentality are often shaped at an early age. Education on the value of biological resources and the importance of sustainable consumption behaviour should therefore start early in life. Raising our children and adolescents with such awareness will help nurture a sustainability-conscious generation and develop a culture of sustainable consumption. While biodiversity is included in the curriculum of General Studies in primary schools, and those of Geography, Science (S1-3), Biology, Combined Science and Integrated Science in secondary schools, we will continue to explore incorporating the concept of biodiversity, including sustainable consumption of biological resources, into the school curriculum as appropriate.

5. Teachers are role models for students and play a key part in promoting the concept of sustainable consumption of biological resources among students. In this connection, we will strive to enhance the capacity of teachers, through professional development programmes, to promote the values of respect and care for nature, green living and sustainable consumption of biological resources in schools. We will provide appropriate teaching materials and training to teachers to facilitate them to effectively inspire students' interest in and awareness about this important topic.

Learning opportunities for the public

6. It is also necessary to boost community enthusiasm, stimulate self-motivation and instigate voluntary actions through awareness programmes for the general public. To enhance the community's appreciation of the value of biological resources, we will continue to create opportunities for the public and encourage participation in experiential learning through guided field trips and volunteer work in outdoor settings. Our country parks, marine parks, Hong Kong Wetland Park as well as UNESCO Hong Kong Geopark are all equipped with informative visitor centres and run a variety of nature appreciation activities, such as workshops, eco-tours and volunteer schemes, for participants of all ages to learn about local biodiversity and its conservation, as well as sustainable consumption of biological resources. Many of these activities are theme-based and organised in collaboration with user groups or non-governmental organisations ("NGOs"). The Government will continue to

enhance the community's experiential learning experience, particularly in relation to sustainable consumption of biological resources, through these efforts, and provide funding support under the Environment and Conservation Fund to NGOs and interested parties to implement education and community engagement programmes.

Social Media and Web-based Promotion

7. In order to cultivate a stronger awareness on the importance of sustainable consumption of biological resources in society, we will formulate promotional plans that leverage the social media's immense penetration and popularity. Among other things, we will make use of our Facebook page "Mr. B Nature Classroom", which has been designed to showcase the rich local biodiversity and generate publicity for BSAP, and develop a new webpage to promote sustainable consumption of biological resources. We will also disseminate the latest relevant messages and information via the web-based biodiversity information hub to be developed under BSAP, so as to reach out to a wider community (particularly adolescents and young adults) real-time.

Government Taking the Lead

8. We fully agree that joint efforts from the entire community are essential to sustainable consumption of biological resources. The Government has been leading by example through developing and adopting green procurement guidelines covering 150 items (including some derived from biological resources) as well as sustainability-conscious food menus under which shark fin, bluefin tuna, black moss, humphead wrasse, Hong Kong grouper (wild caught specimen) and sturgeon caviar will not be consumed in holding official entertainment functions. Building on our current efforts, we will share our green procurement guidelines with major suppliers, business associations and quasi-government organisations, and encourage them to follow suit by developing their own green procurement guidelines. We will also organise promotional events to appeal to businesses to supply more green products and continue to be an important driver in promoting eco-labelled and sustainable products derived from biological resources.

Facilitating Access to Knowledge as Long Term Tools

9. Alongside awareness building through community engagement programmes, it is necessary to facilitate access to relevant knowledge (e.g. which products derived from biological resources are sustainable and where to locate them) so that the public, upon understanding the importance of

sustainable consumption of biological resources, can put such knowledge into sustainable practice in everyday life and business activities. For this purpose, we will collaborate with stakeholders to collate available knowledge and detailed information relevant to sustainable consumption for guiding consumers and businesses' actions. We will also promote and improve access to such information to facilitate understanding on this subject and making wise choices and decision.

Information on Sustainable Consumption of Biological Resources

10. There is a wide range of information that facilitates consumers and businesses to make the right choices in purchasing and procuring sustainable products derived from biological resources. For instance, there are various eco-labels and certification schemes, as well as consumption guides on different product groups. We will encourage and support collating information on the latest development of such schemes and guides with a view to raising public awareness, thereby enhancing consumers' understanding on sustainable products derived from biological resources, as well as better enabling them to make smart choices and business decisions to improve sourcing practices.

Improved Access to Information

11. To facilitate members of the public and traders to access to updated information pertaining to sustainable consumption of biological resources, the Government will develop a webpage on this subject as mentioned in Paragraph 7. The webpage will provide general information on this subject (e.g. the concept of sustainable consumption of biological resources), enable access to good practice guidelines (e.g. green procurement guidelines), and supply links to various online materials related to the subject (e.g. consumer guides and directories of sustainable products derived from biological resources and eco-labels).

WAY FORWARD

12. The Government is committed to biodiversity conservation and sustainable development for the city's long-term growth and prosperity. In this connection, the Government has formulated the first city-level BSAP which outlines the strategy and actions to be taken in the five-year period from 2016 to 2021. In line with the direction of the BSAP to conduct public engagement and explore measures to promote sustainable consumption of biological resources (specific action No. 22a), the SDC has collected views from the public and stakeholders from relevant sectors through a dedicated public

engagement exercise, and put up recommendations to the Government for consideration.

13. Recognising the need to promote sustainable consumption of biological resources, the SDC has formulated 20 recommendations under four aspects, namely (i) to foster a culture of sustainable consumption of biological resources; (ii) to facilitate smart choice for consumers; (iii) to promote best practices among businesses; and (iv) to show leadership on the part of the Government. The Government will follow up on the recommendations of the SDC under the context of the BSAP and government green procurement as per **Annex A**.

14. The Government welcomes the SDC's views and recommendations which have provided valuable pointers on the way forward to promote sustainable consumption of biological resources. To show leadership on the part of the Government, we will adopt "Community Engagement" and "Facilitating Access to Knowledge" as our key strategies towards more sustainable consumption of biological resources and follow up in the context of BSAP¹. In collaboration with stakeholders from various sectors, we will continue to work towards driving a paradigm shift in society towards more sustainable consumption behaviour.

Environmental Protection Department
Environment Bureau
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¹ A working group comprising relevant Government bureaux and departments, and chaired by the Secretary for the Environment, has been established to coordinate the implementation of the BSAP. The Government will also seek advice from the Nature Conservation Sub-committee of the Advisory Council for the Environment on matters related to the implementation of the BSAP.

**The Government's Position and Action Plan on Recommendations in the
Council for Sustainable Development's Report on
Promotion of Sustainable Consumption of Biological Resources**

	Recommendations	Position and Actions
(A) Fostering a Culture of Sustainable Consumption of Biological Resources		
1.	To devise a long term strategy that would help induce behavioural change towards more sustainable consumption of biological resources.	The Government's long-term strategy on inducing behavioral change towards more sustainable consumption of biological resources is set out in the main text.
2.	To formulate promotion plans and publicise promotional messages through social media and electronic devices as far as possible.	In order to achieve stronger awareness on the importance of sustainable consumption of biological resources at a wider societal level, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department ("AFCD") will formulate promotional plans that leverage on social media platforms. For example, the AFCD will utilise the Facebook page (Mr. B Nature Classroom) designed to showcase the rich local biodiversity and generate publicity for BSAP, and develop a new webpage to promote sustainable consumption of biological resources. The AFCD will also disseminate relevant promotional messages, information and slogans via the web-based biodiversity information hub to be developed under BSAP.
3.	To invite the Environmental Campaign Committee ("ECC") to launch a campaign to further promote sustainable consumption of biological resources, and to facilitate NGOs and schools to initiate and implement education and community engagement	The Environmental Protection Department ("EPD") will invite the ECC to launch a campaign to further promote sustainable consumption of biological resources. Funding support will be provided under the Environment and Conservation Fund ("ECF") to NGOs and interested parties to implement education and community engagement programmes. As a start, "Sustainable Consumption of Biological Resources" has been set as a priority theme for Environmental Education and

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	programmes and activities to promote the concept and importance of sustainable consumption of biological resources.	Community Action (“EE&CA”) Projects under the ECF in the 2017/18 2 nd round invitation for funding applications. A briefing was held on 29 August 2017 to enhance the knowledge of NGOs and interested parties on this topic and to encourage funding applications to implement education and community engagement programmes. In addition, “Sustainable Consumption of Biological Resources” will be set as a priority area in the 13 th round of applications for the Sustainable Development Fund (“SDF”) to be launched in the 4 th quarter of 2017.
4.	To promote the values of sustainable consumption of biological resources amongst teachers, make available teaching materials as well as provide training workshops for teachers to facilitate them to strengthen the concept of green living and sustainable consumption of biological resources in primary and secondary schools.	<p>We recognise that teachers play a key role in promoting the concept of sustainable consumption of biological resources amongst students. To facilitate teachers to inspire students’ interest and awareness on this topic, professional development programmes (“PDPs”) will be conducted by the Education Bureau (“EDB”) to promote the values of care for nature and the importance of green living and/or sustainable consumption of biological resources amongst teachers.</p> <p>NGOs will be encouraged to apply for ECF or the AFCD’s subvention to produce teaching materials, as well as organise relevant workshops for teachers to enhance their capacity in handling topics related to green living and sustainable consumption of biological resources. The teaching materials produced will be introduced by the EDB in PDPs, school visits and teachers’ network. They will also be consolidated by the AFCD in the biodiversity information hub to be developed under BSAP as mentioned in response to recommendation #2 above.</p>
5.	To encourage schools to promote sustainable consumption of biological resources through daily activities, such as through incorporating eco-labelled food items into the lunch menu.	The AFCD will introduce the notion of sustainable consumption of biological resources in the <i>Handbook of Selection of Lunch Suppliers</i> as reference for primary and secondary schools to select their lunch suppliers. To encourage suppliers to use eco-labelled food items in their lunch menus provided to the schools, a set of commitments on sustainable diet will be incorporated by the AFCD in the “Letter of Service Commitment of Supplier” in the handbook.

	Recommendations	Position and Actions
		Information on eco-labelled food items will also be disseminated by the EDB through school-based curriculum, learning and teaching materials, professional development programmes, school visits and teachers' network. Schools will also be encouraged to use eco-labelled food items in their lunch menus.
6.	To invite ECC to consider incorporating sustainable consumption of biological resources in assessing its Hong Kong Green School Award; and to consider incorporating this in assessing SDC's Sustainable Development School Award.	Sustainable consumption of biological resources will be included in the assessment criteria in the next round of the Sustainable Development School Award. As for the Hong Kong Green School Award, we have introduced the new criteria of sustainable food in the Self-Assessment Manual of the Hong Kong Green School Award for the 2017/18 school year. With reference to the updating of the <i>Handbook of Selection of Lunch Suppliers</i> as mentioned in the response to recommendation #5 above, further revisions to the Self-Assessment Manual will be proposed to motivate the school community to pursue sustainable consumption of biological resources.
(B) Facilitating Smart Choices for Consumers		
7.	To encourage quasi-government organisations/NGOs with funding support to establish an information platform, which would feature different databases regarding eco-labelled products and the supplier list of such products; and to promote community awareness and knowledge of such platform.	We agree that easily accessible information would facilitate smart and sustainable purchase choices. To this end, we will encourage quasi-government organisations/NGOs to apply for funding from SDF, ECF or other sources to establish the recommended platform and/or conduct relevant projects. The EPD and AFCD are currently supporting an on-going SDF-granted project, namely "Fostering Sustainable Consumption for Hong Kong Business and the Community", initiated by the Business Environment Council, under which a sustainable consumption guide, a recognition scheme, an online directory of sustainable products and a mobile application on sustainable products have already been produced.
8.	To encourage quasi-government organisations/NGOs with funding support to produce simple and clear	

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	sustainable consumption guides which should include recipes covering sustainable live, frozen, dried and canned food.	
9.	To develop a webpage on sustainable consumption of biological resources that would feature pertinent information relating to sustainable consumption of biological resources (e.g. consumer guides, databases regarding eco-labelled products, supplier lists of such products, etc.).	The AFCD will develop a webpage on sustainable consumption of biological resources as mentioned in response to recommendation #2 above, with a view to providing general information on this topic for the public. The webpage to be developed can be further linked to external websites and directories, and serve as a one-stop shop for information related to this subject, thereby granting easy access to information pertaining to sustainable consumption and facilitating choices for consumers. The webpage will also be featured in the biodiversity information hub to be developed under BSAP as mentioned in the response to recommendation #2 above.
(C) Promoting Best Practices among Businesses		
10.	To encourage businesses to provide wider supply of sustainable products.	<p>The Government will encourage businesses to provide a wider supply of sustainable products, as well as to enhance the competitiveness of local agricultural and aquaculture industries. For example, the AFCD will continue the Organic Farming Support Service and the Accredited Farm Scheme, as well as the Accredited Fish Farm Scheme to enhance the quality and supply of local agricultural and aquaculture products, and seek to enhance competitiveness of the local agricultural and aquaculture industries respectively.</p> <p>The EPD will share with businesses and major suppliers its Green Procurement Guidelines, which currently consists of 150 items, including some derived from biological resources, and organise promotional events to appeal to businesses to supply more green products, including those with sustainable elements, such as paper products with proper certification.</p>

	Recommendations	Position and Actions
11.	To encourage quasi-government organisations/NGOs with funding support to initiate a scheme in partnership with interested businesses to promote sustainable products to consumers through some forms of bonus scheme or reward programme.	<p>We fully agree that joint efforts from the entire community are essential along the road to sustainable consumption of biological resources. To facilitate businesses to realise their creative ideas that can promote sustainable products, we will encourage quasi-government organisations/NGOs to apply for funding from SDF, ECF or other sources to conduct relevant schemes.</p> <p>As mentioned in response to recommendation #7 above, the EPD and AFCD are supporting an on-going SDF-granted project initiated by the Business Environment Council in which a sustainable consumption recognition scheme crediting sustainable suppliers and enterprises has already been established.</p>
12.	To encourage quasi-government organisations/NGOs with funding support to launch a charter scheme on voluntary commitment by eateries and retail outlets to supply sustainable products as a kind of sustainability best practice for corporations and businesses; and to encourage cooperation with social media to advertise chartered eateries.	
13.	To incorporate consideration of sustainable consumption of biological resources in the context of the Hong Kong Awards for Environmental Excellence.	The EPD has invited the ECC to incorporate sustainable consumption of biological resources as one of the assessment aspects for sectors such as “Hotels and Recreational Clubs”, “Restaurants” and “Shops and Retailers” under the Hong Kong Awards for Environmental Excellence.
14.	To promote the Green Procurement Guidelines to businesses; and to organise workshops/briefings/sharing sessions to encourage voluntary commitment by businesses and	The EPD will share its Green Procurement Guidelines and organise promotional events to appeal to businesses and quasi-government organisations to use more green products, including those with sustainable elements. The EPD will also encourage the relevant business associations and quasi-government organisations to develop their own green procurement guidelines.

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	quasi-government organisations to: (i) adopt green procurement and (ii) develop best practice guidelines to facilitate the adoption.	
15.	To promote the sustainable development of fisheries and agricultural industries, including assisting fishermen and farmers in switching to sustainable mode of operations.	<p>Having launched the New Agriculture Policy in 2016, the AFCD will continue to promote the sustainable development of local agriculture by implementing key initiatives including (i) encouraging the agriculture industry and interested parties to make use of the \$500 million Sustainable Agricultural Development Fund to help enhance the overall competitiveness of the industry; (ii) establishing an Agricultural Park to help nurture agrotechnology and agro-business management; (iii) exploring the feasibility of identifying Agricultural Priority Areas; (iv) strengthening support for farmers to modernise and assisting them to move up the value chain; and (v) facilitating leisure farming auxiliary to agriculture.</p> <p>The AFCD has also been implementing a series of measures to promote the sustainable development of fisheries in Hong Kong over the past few years. Looking forward, the AFCD will continue to assist the local fisheries industry in moving towards sustainable development. In particular, the AFCD will step up efforts to (i) encourage the fisheries industry and interested parties to make good use of the \$500 million Sustainable Fisheries Development Fund to help enhance the overall competitiveness of the industry; (ii) enhance the promotion of high quality local fisheries products through the Fish Marketing Organization and the implementation of the Accredited Fish Farm Scheme; (iii) continue the efforts to combat illegal fishing activities including trawling to help reserve fisheries resources; and (iv) prepare for the establishment of Fisheries Protection Area(s) to protect important fish nursery and spawning grounds in Hong Kong.</p>

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(D) Government Taking the Lead		
16.	To regularly review the food list to be avoided in official banquets as stipulated in Environment Bureau's circular to demonstrate Government's commitment to sustainable consumption and green living, and to promote the same to businesses, quasi-government organisations and NGOs.	We will regularly review the food list to be avoided in Government's official banquets. For example, humphead wrasse, Hong Kong grouper (wild caught specimen) and sturgeon caviar have been excluded from menus at official functions since January 2017.
17.	To consider setting targets and mapping out a timeline on (i) expanding the list of products derived from biological resources in the Green Procurement Guidelines and (ii) making the sustainability specifications of such products mandatory, in the light of market situation and government procurement needs.	To encourage the adoption of more green products (including those derived from biological resources) by bureaux and departments, the EPD is commissioning a consultancy study to review and expand the Green Procurement Guidelines with due regard to the market situation and government procurement needs.
18.	In respect of products derived from biological resources, to consider (i) enhancing the consideration of sustainability in the public procurement/tendering process and (ii) setting appropriate targets and mapping out a timeline, with a view to encouraging the use of sustainable products.	<p>The consultancy study mentioned in response to recommendation #17 above will also cover a review of existing public procurement/tendering process with a view to further enhancing consideration of green factors, including environmental sustainability, in green government procurement.</p> <p>The EPD will in parallel encourage suppliers of relevant paper products on the Government Logistics Department's Supplier Lists to provide a wider supply of products meeting the updated green specifications, as well as encourage the public and business sectors to take into consideration the green specifications in their</p>

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		procurement and tendering process.
19.	To encourage quasi-government organisations/academic institutions with funding support to conduct territory-wide study to examine behavioural changes on sustainable consumption of biological resources in Hong Kong, with a view to raising awareness and educating the public on sustainable consumption of biological resources.	Quasi-government organisations/NGOs will be encouraged to apply for funding from SDF, ECF or other sources to conduct projects related to this recommendation.
20.	To keep in view the case for strengthened measures and use of economic and financial tools to promote sustainable consumption of biological resources in the longer run.	The Government will evaluate the need for strengthened measures, taking into account the effectiveness of the implemented measures and the results of studies on changes in consumers' behaviour (i.e. response to recommendation #19 above) amongst other considerations.