

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

EEB(F)071

(Question Serial No. 2238)

Head: (49) Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not specified

Programme: (1) Food Safety and Public Health

Controlling Officer: Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene (Donald NG)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Environment and Ecology

Question:

As shown in the key performance measures of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department, the target for conducting inspections of farms exporting food animals to Hong Kong is 35 farms per year, while the actual numbers of inspections were 55 and 56 in 2023 and 2024 respectively, exceeding the target for 2 consecutive years. The Department stated that a mixed mode of on-site inspections and document assessment was adopted as a post-COVID-19 epidemic arrangement and such mode will continue to be adopted in 2025. In this connection, please advise this Committee of the following:

- (a) What is/are the reason(s) for the actual number of inspections exceeding the target for 2 consecutive years? How does the mixed mode enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of inspections?
- (b) What was the estimated expenditure for inspecting such farms in the past 3 years? Was the actual expenditure higher than the budget? If yes, what/are the reason(s)?
- (c) Will the mixed mode be further optimised by, for example, introducing technological tools or enhancing data analysis to increase the precision of inspection work and the efficiency of resource utilisation?
- (d) On the premise of ensuring the safety and quality of food animals, will consideration be given to adjusting the target number of inspections for better alignment with the actual demand and better resource allocation?

Asked by: Hon CHAN Wing-yan, JoePHY (LegCo internal reference no.: 36)

Reply:

- (a) The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department holds discussions with the Mainland authority annually and takes into account factors such as the quantity of food animals supplied to Hong Kong, previous testing results and the geographical distribution of farms to formulate inspection plans.

In 2022, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all inspections were conducted by means of document assessments. Since 2023, CFS has adopted a mixed mode of on-site inspections for some farms and document assessments for other farms after

discussions with the Mainland authority. The mixed mode provides greater flexibility for inspection arrangements and resource deployment, thus resulting in an increase in the number of inspections.

- (b) As mentioned in (a), CFS reviewed the farms by means of document assessments in 2022 due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, the budget and expenditure for inspecting farms for that year are not available. In 2023-24 and 2024-25, the budgets for inspecting such farms were \$580,000 and \$840,000 respectively. The actual expenditures in 2023-24 and 2024-25 were \$160,000 and \$400,000 respectively, both were lower than the budgets.
- (c)-(d) In the future, CFS will continue to hold discussions with the Mainland authority, further optimise the inspection mode and adjust the target number of inspections as appropriate.

- End -