

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

EEB(F)087

(Question Serial No. 0416)

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 (Donald NG)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Environment and Ecology

Question:

On taking forward proposals to streamline the food licencing regime by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department, please advise this Committee of the following:

- (1) Have the procedures of the current licencing regime been reviewed? What specific measures are in place to streamline the procedures to facilitate the trade's application for licences?
- (2) What are the timeline for implementing the streamlined food licencing regime and its expected outcomes?
- (3) After streamlining the licencing regime, can the staff establishment and expenditure in this respect be reduced?

Asked by: Hon CHEUNG Yu-yan, Tommy (LegCo internal reference no.: 33)

Reply:

- (1) and (2) The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) continuously reviews and optimises the current licencing regime of food businesses, and has introduced the following measures in recent years:

- (i) "Professional Certification System"

Since February 2024, the scope of the Professional Certification System, which adopts a "licence first, inspection later" approach, has been expanded from light refreshment restaurant and food factory licences to cover general restaurant licences, expediting the approval process by approximately 14 days and enabling applicants to have a better grasp of the processing time.

- (ii) Exempting restaurants from the requirement of applying for a bakery licence for selling bakery products prepared on the premises

With effect from February 2024, an operator of a licensed restaurant with a designated area for selling bread and other bakery products prepared in the restaurant is allowed to provide both retail and dine-in services without the need to apply for a separate bakery licence.

(iii) Relaxing the submission of particular documents in connection with licence application

With effect from February 2024, applicants are no longer required to submit a certificate for the permission to use the communal toilet signed by the property management and a food supplier's certificate under specific circumstances, but they are still required to comply with the relevant licensing conditions pertaining to the food supplier's certificate after the issuance of the licence.

(iv) "DIY application for food business licences"

In March 2024, a concise instructional animation titled "DIY application for food business licences", which was produced from the users' angle, was published to enable applicants to gain an easy understanding of the licence application process so that start-up costs of micro, small and medium enterprises can be reduced.

(v) Issuing e-licences for food business

Since June 2024, FEHD has made available e-licences for all kind of food business and provided applicants with more information on the application status through the "Online Licence Application Tracking Facility" to increase transparency of the approval process.

(vi) Relaxing Food Business Licence Terms for Farms Engaged in Commercial Production that Cook Their Own Produces

Since June 2024, FEHD has, in support of the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department's implementation of the "Agri enJoy" Scheme, set more relaxed food business licence terms to facilitate the sale of self-grown crops prepared with non-flame cooking on farms engaged in commercial agricultural production, thereby facilitating farmers' promotion of their agricultural products and enhancing visitors' experience.

(vii) "Composite permit"

In January 2025, FEHD introduced the "composite permit" to cover multiple restricted food items sold at the same premises / through an online platform.

FEHD expects that the above measures will reduce compliance costs for the trade and facilitate business operation as a whole. FEHD will keep the licencing regime of food businesses under review, with a view to further optimising the relevant procedures.

- (3) The above measures, which aim at facilitating business operation and reducing the trade's compliance costs, have no actual bearing on FEHD's staff establishment and expenditure involved in handling food business licences.