

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

EEB(F)100

(Question Serial No. 0757)

Head: (49) Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

Subhead (No. & title): (000) Operational expenses

Programme: (3) Market Management and Hawker Control

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

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Environment and Ecology

Question:

Under Programme (3), the provision for 2026-27 is \$75.6 million more than the revised estimate for 2025-26 which, as explained on page 251, is mainly due to the increase in the provision for outsourced service contracts and cash flow requirement for non-recurrent item. Please advise this Committee of the following:

1. What are the outsourced services with increased provision? What are the reasons for increasing the provision and cash flow? Does it involve re-tendering of outsourced work? If yes, what is the work?
2. It is mentioned under Programme (3) that there will be a net decrease of 53 posts in the coming year. What are the main posts involved? What measures will be taken to make up for the loss of manpower?
3. The figures show that the numbers of licensed fixed pitch hawkers and itinerant hawkers have been decreasing every year. What are the reasons for the decrease? What are the numbers of cases where hawker licence is surrendered on the licensee's own initiative, and where there is no succession to hawker licence upon the death of licensee?
4. It is estimated that there are still about 600 unlicensed hawkers on the streets, showing that some members of the public still want to make a living in the hawker trade. In this connection, will the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department consider putting up the fixed pitch hawker licences surrendered and repossessed each year for open auction by members of the public who would like to enter the trade, so as to provide employment opportunities, fill the vacancies in fixed pitch hawker areas and boost the popularity of hawker areas?
5. The estimated number of joint operations against illegal hawking with other departments in 2026 is 1 100, a significant drop from the actual number in 2025. What is/are the reason(s) for the decrease?
6. The number of hawker blackspots has remained at 45 for 3 consecutive years. What has prevented the number from going down? Will members of the public be allowed to continue to make a living as unlicensed hawkers?

Asked by: Hon LAM Ming-fung, Lothair (LegCo internal reference no.: 36)

Reply:

1. Under Programme (3), the outsourced services with increased provision in 2026-27 mainly include market management, cleansing and pest control, security guard service and market/hawker bazaar cleansing service. The increase in provision is due to increased contract prices, while the increase in cash flow requirement for non-recurrent item is due to the need to provide ex-gratia payment for tenants affected by market development plans.
2. To dovetail with the Productivity Enhancement Programme of the Government and to meet its goal of enhancing manpower utilisation, the civil service establishment will be reduced by 2% each in 2026-27 and 2027-28. Having reviewed factors such as overall service demand, operational needs and vacancy situations, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) has made arrangements in response to the above measure of reducing the civil service establishment by 2% in 2026-27. In 2026-27, the 53 posts to be deleted under Programme (3) of FEHD are all junior civil service posts (mostly at Master Pay Scale Points 0 to 15 and within the Model Scale 1 Pay Scale). FEHD will continue to adopt management measures and digitalisation with a view to enhancing efficiency through reprioritisation, internal re-deployment, streamlining of work processes and application of technology, so that it can continue to deliver high-quality public services to members of the public while the civil service is being further streamlined.
3. The number of fixed pitch hawker and itinerant hawker licences decreases every year. This is mainly due to the death of licensees, failure to renew the licences and surrender of licences by licensees. FEHD does not keep a breakdown of cases with no succession to the licence upon the death of licensee. The number of licences surrendered on the licensee's initiative in the past 3 years is provided in Annex.
4. In 2019 and 2022, FEHD made vacant fixed hawker pitches suitable for re-allocation available for application by eligible persons and issued new licences. At the end of the scheme, a total of 523 new Fixed Pitch (Other Classes) Hawker Licences were issued. FEHD will also proactively consider opening up vacant fixed hawker pitches for application again when appropriate.
5. In the past, FEHD had mounted joint operations with the Hong Kong Police Force (the Police) from time to time to deal with unlicensed hawking and street obstruction caused by shop front extension (SFE). The Government amended the Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance (Cap. 132) and other relevant legislation in 2025. Provisions have been added to empower FEHD to take law enforcement action against SFE independently so as to increase law enforcement efficiency and deterrent effect. Upon the implementation of the new ordinance on 17 August 2025, law enforcement officers of FEHD can handle SFE problems independently without the need to rely on the power of the Police, resulting in fewer joint operations with other departments.
6. Society has different views about hawkers and their hawking activities. Some find on-street trading by itinerant hawkers convenient, while many consider that these activities are prone to causing obstruction, environmental nuisance or even health hazards. To balance the needs and expectations of various parties, the Government regulates hawking activities through a licensing regime so as to manage risks in environmental hygiene and fire safety, etc.

Hawker blackspots refer to locations where unlicensed hawkers congregate. FEHD conducts quarterly surveys to review and update the list of hawker blackspots according to the actual circumstances of various districts. FEHD's law enforcement strategy on hawker blackspots is to take prosecution action without prior warning. To enhance transparency and avoid misunderstandings, FEHD will upload the information of hawker blackspots (i.e. the locations where prosecution action will be taken without prior warning) to its website for public reference.

Number of hawker licences surrendered on licensee's initiative

	2023	2024	2025
Fixed pitch hawker licence	81	120	98
Itinerant hawker licence	1	3	2

Note:

- Including hawker licences surrendered due to redevelopment works, but excluding those surrendered, expired or cancelled due to the death of licensee or transfer of licence.
- There are no succession arrangements for itinerant hawker licences. As for all fixed pitch hawker licences issued on or after 21 May 2010, including those newly issued for succession or transfer purposes, there are no succession or transfer arrangements.

- End -