

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

EEB(F)116

(Question Serial No. 3092)

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:

During 2026-27, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department will take forward initiatives to allow dogs to enter permitted food premises and streamline the application procedures for outside seating accommodation (OSA) of restaurants. In this connection, please advise this Committee of:

- 1) the timetable of taking forward initiatives to allow dogs to enter permitted food premises, and the manpower resources and expenditure to be involved; and
- 2) the details of the plan to streamline the application procedures for OSA of restaurants and the extent to which the average application processing time is expected to reduce, as compared with that at present.

Asked by: Hon LEUNG Chun, Jonathan (LegCo internal reference no.: 5)

Reply:

- 1) Regarding the arrangements for taking forward initiatives to allow dogs to enter permitted food premises, the Government published in the Gazette on 13 March 2026 the Food Business (Amendment) Regulation 2026, which was tabled at the Legislative Council on 18 March 2026 for vetting. Upon commencement of the amendment regulation, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department will organise briefing sessions for the trade before inviting applications. Permission for the first batch of applications is expected to be granted by mid-2026. Meanwhile, publicity and public education work will be carried out. The Department will allocate resources to form dedicated teams in various districts to handle the work related to allowing dogs to enter permitted restaurants. The staff concerned are also tasked with other regulatory duties pertaining to food premises. Therefore, the Department does not keep a breakdown of the resources specifically for handling the work related to allowing dogs to enter permitted restaurants.
- 2) At present, the processing time for applications for outside seating accommodation (OSA) varies depending on the time spent by the applicants in complying with the relevant licensing requirements, settling objections raised by the public or other

departments concerned and resolving relevant land issues. In 2025, the median time taken for processing applications for OSA of restaurants (from receipt to approval of the applications) was 12 months. To shorten the processing time, the Department and the relevant departments have, as led by the Deputy Chief Secretary for Administration, streamlined procedures and established a new joint vetting mechanism. With the introduction of the new mechanism in 2026-27, applicants of simple and straightforward cases are expected to be given approval-in-principle and informed of the specific licensing requirements within approximately 1 month.

- End -