

LCQ20: School lunch boxes

Following is a question by the Hon Nixie Lam and a written reply by the Secretary for Health, Professor Lo Chung-mau, in the Legislative Council today (November 20):

Question:

There are views that at present, school lunch boxes (lunch boxes) in Hong Kong are plagued with problems such as poor taste, insufficient nutrition, limited menu choices and excessive sodium, which may affect the development of school children during their critical growth stages. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) given that according to the Department of Health's Student Health Service Annual Health Report for 2022/23 School Year, the prevalence of overweight (including obesity) among primary and secondary school students in the 2022-2023 school year were 19.5% and 20.5% respectively, and there are views that this has reflected the increasingly serious problem of childhood obesity, whether the authorities will formulate guidelines on the nutrition standards of lunch boxes with a view to reducing their oil and sodium content, and focus on improving the taste and quality of lunch boxes, so as to ensure that school children will be able to take in the necessary nutrition;

(2) whether it will step up the regulation of lunch box suppliers and conduct more stringent tests in light of the relevant hygiene standards, so as to ensure that lunch boxes are fresh and hygienic; and

(3) whether it will require schools to establish effective communication channels and feedback mechanisms with parents, so as to notify parents of the problems concerning the quality of lunch boxes in a timely manner, and enable parents to know about the quality of lunch boxes and give their comments at once?

Reply:

President,

The Government attaches great importance to healthy eating and weight issues among children. Healthy eating promotes healthy growth of school children and reduces their risks of chronic diseases such as heart disease, diabetes and certain types of cancers. The Department of Health (DH) and the Education Bureau (EDB), with the support of the education sector, the medical sector and relevant professional bodies, have launched the EatSmart@school.hk Campaign (ESS) since the 2006/07 school year to raise public awareness of and attention to healthy eating of children, and to create an environment conducive to healthy eating in schools and the community. Over the years, the ESS has been enhanced based on the necessity. At present, the ESS mainly comprises the EatSmart School Accreditation Scheme which aims at providing

guidance to schools for developing a healthier eating environment on campus through accreditation; the Salt Reduction Scheme for School Lunches which aims to enhance the collaboration with lunch suppliers to reduce the sodium content in school lunches; and the Joyful Fruit Month which aims to cultivate the daily habit of fruit consumption among school children.

The fundamental cause of obesity problem is an energy imbalance between the calories consumed from food as well as beverages and the calories expended in by normal body functions along with daily activities. Lack of physical activity is one of the main risk factors for obesity. Children should also regularly engage in sufficient amount of physical activities to reduce fat accumulation in order to make the weight control effect more lasting.

Meanwhile, education and health are closely intertwined, and are of paramount importance to personal growth. Schools play a key role in student development by providing effective and extensive health promotion. At the same time, good communication and collaboration between home and school can set a common goal for healthy living and education for children.

In consultation with the EDB, the Environment and Ecology Bureau (EEB) and the DH, the reply to the question raised by the Hon Nixie Lam is as follows:

(1) The DH's Student Health Service Centres (SHSCs) provide annual health assessment service to all daytime primary and secondary school students to identify health problems at an early stage for timely advice and intervention. Among the primary and secondary school students attending the SHSCs in the 2022/23 school year, the prevalence of overweight (including obesity) was 19.5 per cent and 20.5 per cent respectively. The preliminary figures for the 2023/24 school year (as at the end of August 2024) show a slight improvement in the overweight (including obesity) situation among primary school students, with a prevalence of 16.3 per cent, while the prevalence for secondary school students is 20.0 per cent.

The DH has published and updated the Nutritional Guidelines on Lunch for Students (Guidelines) since 2006 to ensure that primary and secondary school students can have nutritionally balanced school lunches that meet the needs of their growth and development, and serve as a reference for the quantity and quality of food as stipulated in the contracts signed between schools and lunch suppliers. The Guidelines encompass the sodium level of lunches when preparing the recipes and during the cooking process, providing at least one serving of vegetables in lunches, keeping the volume ratio of grains, vegetables and meat in lunches at a ratio of three: two: one and increasing the ratio of whole grains, etc. In addition, the DH recommends the use of ingredients low in oil, salt, and sugar, and use more natural ingredients, herbs, and spices to enhance the flavour of dishes, making lunches more appetising. The DH regularly discusses with lunch suppliers, advising them to prepare food with reference to the Guidelines to ensure the lunches meet the recommended nutritional requirements.

The EDB issues circulars and guidelines to call on schools to refer to

the Guidelines published by the DH, as well as the guidelines issued by other relevant government departments, to formulate and implement a policy on healthy eating; and to pay attention to the nutritional quality of lunches and make appropriate arrangement when selecting lunch suppliers. Besides, the DH encourages schools to monitor school lunches regularly in accordance with its School Lunch Monitoring Manual and to reflect their opinions to lunch suppliers to ensure the nutritional quality of school lunches.

In addition, the DH launched the Health Promoting School Programme as a pilot project in 30 schools from the 2019/20 to 2022/23 school years. Since 2023/24 school year, the DH has regularised the programme and named it Whole School Health Programme (WSHP), to further promulgate the Health Promoting School framework advocated by the World Health Organization (WHO) and assist participating schools to become a health-promoting school for living, learning and working, including enhancing physical activities and diet arrangements.

The DH has been encouraging members of the public to do more physical activities through different channels. For example, it has launched the "I'm So Smart" Community Health Promotion Programme since 2012, which aims to enhance community collaboration and promote healthy living model with healthy eating and regular physical activities; launched the "10 000 Steps a Day" campaign since 2022 with a series of publicity activities in the community in phases to promote walking, including organising walking challenges, producing promotional videos and thematic website. The DH will continue to encourage the public (including children) to do more physical activities and establish an active lifestyle through various channels.

In the future, the Government will continue to collaborate with schools and parents to improve healthy eating and weight issues among children. In the 2024 Policy Address, the Government has put forward measures to create a better environment for the healthy growth of children. The relevant measures include:

(i) To formulate a life-course approach health promotion strategy having regard to Hong Kong's demographic structure and the health needs of different social groups (including school children) and draw up health management plans according to different age groups and health statuses so as to enhance public health comprehensively and systematically; and

(ii) To strengthen and extend the WSHP to cover all primary and secondary schools in Hong Kong and provide guidelines to each school to improve school health policies and establish healthy school environment to implement the WHO's recommendations of engaging in an average of at least 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous-intensity physical activity every day and developing healthy eating habits. Health reports will also be compiled for each participating school to recommend school-based measures to improve the arrangement of students' physical activities and meals, etc., with a view to further improving students' physical and psychological well-being. The WSHP covers four health themes, including physical activity, healthy eating, mental health, and social well-being. The DH will provide health promotional activities, workshops, and information to assist schools in carrying out

school-based health promotion. The WSHP has set up a dedicated website to provide schools with recommendations and resources related to physical activities and healthy eating.

Meanwhile, the Primary Healthcare Commission is also actively implementing various measures to help citizens manage their own health in accordance with the Primary Healthcare Blueprint, including promoting the Life Course Preventive Care Plan through District Health Centres (DHCs), which aims to provide services to citizens including guidance on healthy lifestyle practices, in order to address their health needs at different life stages. For children and adolescents, guidance on balanced diet and regular physical activity is provided under the Life Course Preventive Care Plan to promote healthy growth and overall well-being. The DHCs also offer different types of support to the general public (including children and adolescents), such as providing recommendation on weight management, organising healthy diet talks, and collaborating with schools to provide health education, health risk factors assessment, low salt and sugar diet education and promotion activities, etc.

(2) According to the information provided by the EEB, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) has all along strived to ensure that the food factories supplying school lunches comply with the licensing conditions and the relevant statutory requirements on food safety and environmental hygiene through its licensing regime, inspections, and enforcement actions in accordance with the Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance (Cap. 132) and the Food Business Regulation (Cap. 132X). The FEHD conducts regular and blitz inspections on a risk-based basis. If irregularities were detected, FEHD staff would issue warnings or instigate prosecution to regulate the food factories and safeguard food safety.

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the FEHD has been collecting food samples (including from school lunch boxes) on a risk-based approach, for chemical and microbiological tests through its regular Food Surveillance Programme to ensure food sold in Hong Kong complies with relevant requirements and is fit for human consumption.

To cater for the new school year, between July and October 2024, the FEHD has inspected all the 46 licensed food factories supplying school lunch boxes while the CFS has collected over 130 lunch box samples from these licensed food factories supplying school lunch boxes. Test results of all samples were satisfactory.

To safeguard food safety on campuses, lunch box caterers should handle students' lunch boxes properly, adhering to basic principles of food hygiene and safety, including the storage and temperature requirements during food delivery. Hot meals should be kept at temperatures preventing bacterial growth until they are delivered to schools. Besides, the CFS has published the guideline "Developing a School Food Safety Plan Based on HACCP system (for School Lunch Box Caterers)" for lunch box caterers' reference to remind them to take appropriate measures to enhance the safety of lunch box production and prevent food contamination hazards. The CFS has also arranged seminars for lunch box caterers and schools to provide information on the

Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point system, safety of lunch boxes, high-risk foods and how to implement the Five Keys to Food Safety, etc.

(3) Home and school are the main environment where children learn and develop healthy eating habits. Home-school co-operation is the key to help children develop good eating habits.

According to the information provided by the EDB, in the process of selecting lunch supplier, schools will discuss with and seek approval from the management authority such as the Incorporated Management Committee, which comprises parent representatives to reflect parents' views. In addition to the above-mentioned channel, the EDB encourages schools to invite parents to participate in the discussion of lunch arrangements, for example, engaging them in the lunch supplier selection team to develop lunch requirements, selection criteria, marking scheme and major terms of the tender/contract. Schools should also communicate with parents on the nutritional value of the lunch provided and invite their feedback in order to monitor the quality of school lunch jointly on an ongoing basis.

Conclusion of “Conversations with Global Investors” seminar of Global Financial Leaders’ Investment Summit (with photos)

The following is issued on behalf of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority:

The "Conversations with Global Investors" forum marked the successful conclusion of the three-day Global Financial Leaders' Investment Summit (Summit) in Hong Kong today (November 20).

About 280 overseas and local leaders from across the financial industry, businesses and public sector attended the forum, which was jointly organised by the Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA), the Securities and Futures Commission (SFC) and the Hong Kong Academy of Finance (AoF).

Under the Summit's theme "Sailing through Changes", today's forum featured more than 20 global leading investors, who shared their valuable and timely insights on how to explore new opportunities in different investment markets by managing risks and embracing change. In particular, they discussed the investment outlook and long-term asset allocation strategies; explored the opportunities in alternative assets and key trends in private equity in Asia; and opined on the implications of technological transformation for the investment community.

The Chief Executive of the HKMA and the Chairman of the AoF, Mr Eddie Yue, said "This is the third year that Hong Kong has hosted the Investment Summit. I am glad to see that the Summit was well-received by the global financial leaders again, and has become part of the annual visit plans of many of them. With the Summit becoming an annual event, I am confident that the insightful exchange of views by global financial leaders will continue to inspire us as we sail through the unprecedented changes in the world today."

The Chief Executive Officer of the SFC, Ms Julia Leung, said "In global markets, the many forces of transformation have continued to reshape our market practices, growth strategies and also regulation. The leading investment managers gathered here today to identify evolving market trends to stay steps ahead, harness the power of transformation and drive positive change in an era of predictable unpredictability."

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Overall, the three-day Summit welcomed over 350 participants, including more than 100 group chairmen or chief executive officers from the world's top financial institutions, representing banks, securities firms, asset owners, asset managers, private equity and venture capital firms, hedge funds and insurers.



[LCQ5: Opening up of the Mainland](#)

market to Hong Kong on trade in services

Following is a question by the Dr Hon Lo Wai-kwok and a reply by the Under Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Dr Bernard Chan, in the Legislative Council today (November 20):

Question:

On the ninth of last month, the Mainland signed the Second Agreement Concerning Amendment to the Mainland and Hong Kong Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement Agreement on Trade in Services with Hong Kong, further opening up its market to Hong Kong in a number of professional services sectors. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it will join hands with professional, trade or business associations in Hong Kong to actively promote co-operation with Mainland professional regulatory bodies in ensuring a streamlined and transparent certification process for the relevant professional qualifications, and further enhancing the mechanisms for mutual recognition of professional qualifications between the Mainland and Hong Kong to minimise repetitive vetting as far as possible; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) whether it will allocate additional resources to actively promote innovation and digital transformation as well as the development of new quality productive forces in the local industrial, commercial and professional sectors, thereby boosting their competitiveness and facilitating the opening up of the Mainland market for trade in services; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) whether it will actively seek co-operation with the relevant Mainland authorities and professional organisations to build an international co-operation platform for local enterprises providing professional services, so as to enable local enterprises to join forces with their Mainland counterparts in tapping new markets, including participating in more infrastructure projects in the Belt and Road countries, thereby further expanding the share of Hong Kong's professional services sector in the international market; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

Last month, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government and the Ministry of Commerce signed the Second Agreement Concerning Amendment to the Agreement on Trade in Services (Amendment

Agreement II) under the Mainland and Hong Kong Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement (CEPA), introducing new liberalisation measures for different service sectors where Hong Kong enjoys competitive advantages, making it easier for Hong Kong service suppliers to develop business on the Mainland and enabling more Hong Kong professionals to obtain qualifications so as to provide services to the Mainland market. The new Agreement will be implemented from March 1, 2025. The HKSAR Government will conduct more promotion and publicity with a view to assisting the trade in making good use of the new CEPA measures.

Having consulted the Development Bureau, the Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau, the Housing Bureau and the Innovation, Technology and Industry Bureau, the reply to the three parts of the question is as follows:

(1) Under the framework of CEPA, the Mainland has already implemented preferential and facilitation measures for Hong Kong in a great majority of services trade sectors, including relaxing qualification requirements for Hong Kong professionals to provide services, allowing Hong Kong professionals to sit for examinations, register, practise and set up enterprises on the Mainland as well as encouraging mutual recognition of professional qualifications by professional bodies from both sides. To date, mutual recognition of professional qualifications or exemption arrangements for papers of professional qualification examinations have been put in place in a number of services sectors, including construction and related engineering, securities and futures, banking as well as real estate.

For construction and related engineering professional services, Hong Kong professional bodies and the Mainland's relevant regulatory authorities have signed mutual recognition agreements for six professional qualifications, including those for general practice surveyors, architects, structural engineers, planners, quantity surveyors and building surveyors. To dovetail with the National 14th Five-Year Plan in respect of supporting the strategy of high-quality development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA), the Development Bureau has collaborated with the relevant Mainland authorities to promulgate the Interim Guidelines for the Management of Hong Kong Engineering Construction Consultant Enterprises and Professionals Starting Business and Practising in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area Cities (Interim Guidelines) in 2021, which allows eligible Hong Kong enterprises and professionals in five disciplines, namely engineering, architecture, surveying, planning and landscape architecture, to acquire equivalent qualifications on the Mainland through a simple registration process, thereby allowing them to provide direct services in the nine Mainland cities of the GBA without the need to obtain mutual recognition of professional qualifications, and avoiding the need of repetitive recognition of those enterprises' and professionals' qualifications by each city in Guangdong Province.

The Amendment Agreement II further expands the coverage of eligible enterprises under the Interim Guidelines to also allow Hong Kong general practice surveying enterprises to provide professional services in Guangdong Province upon registration, and to allow registered Hong Kong consultant

firms to bid for consultancy projects in joint ventures in the GBA to enable the Hong Kong construction and related engineering sector to develop business on the Mainland more easily.

For the securities and futures sector, the Hong Kong Securities and Futures Commission (SFC) and the China Securities Regulatory Commission have implemented an arrangement for mutual recognition of professional qualifications, and simplified the relevant procedures for obtaining securities practicing registration and applying for the fund or futures practicing qualifications on the Mainland. Hong Kong professionals with relevant licence issued by the SFC only need to pass the Mainland's examination on the relevant laws and regulations; and the examination on the foundation paper is not required.

For the banking sector, the Hong Kong Institute of Bankers (HKIB) and the China Banking Association (CBA) signed the Memorandum of Understanding on Mutual Recognition of Personal Wealth Management Qualification Certificates in 2009, officially launching the mutual recognition mechanism. Subsequently, the two sides signed addendums twice to improve the relevant arrangements. The CBA, the China Bankers Institute and the HKIB signed Addendum III in 2022 to ensure eligible practitioners can obtain the Associate Retail Wealth Professional (ARWP) professional qualification issued by the HKIB. Under the Agreement, financial practitioners from the Mainland and Hong Kong can obtain "dual qualifications" (Level 1 of Qualification Certificate of Banking Professional and ARWP) through the mutual recognition mechanism.

For the estate agency services sector, the regulating authorities on the two sides (namely Hong Kong's Estate Agents Authority and the China Institute of Real Estate Appraisers and Agents (CIREA)) have signed an agreement to allow the participation of a certain number of qualified estate agents nominated by each side to participate in the specially-designed training courses and examinations organised by the other party. Upon completing the course and passing the examination, estate agents can apply for the qualifications to practise in the relevant sector. As at end October 2024, 145 Hong Kong estate agents are holding registration certificates granted by the CIREA.

(2) The Government endeavours to promote innovation and digital transformation of the local industries as well as the commercial and professional sectors to enhance their competitiveness.

To encourage more enterprises to conduct research and development (R&D) in Hong Kong, the Government amended the Inland Revenue Ordinance in 2018 to provide a two-tiered enhanced tax deduction regime for expenditure on "qualifying R&D activities". The claims for tax deduction on R&D expenditure for the year of assessment 2022/23 was about \$3.9 billion, more than doubled that for the year of assessment prior to the implementation of the measure, indicating that this measure could encourage enterprises to devote more resources to local R&D.

The R&D centres under the purview of Innovation and Technology

Commission also act as a focal point for technology collaboration among the Government, industry, academia and research sectors, and work closely with universities and the industry in encouraging investment in R&D from local private enterprises with a view to enhancing their technological know-how and facilitating technology transfer and commercialisation, thereby supporting the upgrading and transformation of the traditional industries.

The Government has also allocated funding to launch the Cyberport's \$500 million Digital Transformation Support Pilot Programme, under which funding will be provided on a one-to-one matching basis to assist small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the retail and food and beverage industries in applying e-payment and other ready-to-use basic digital solutions, so as to expedite their digital transformation. We will expand the scope of the Programme to cover tourism and personal services industries.

(3) The Government is committed to consolidating Hong Kong's role as the functional platform for the Belt and Road (B&R) and giving full play to the roles as a "super connector" and "super value-adder", thereby assisting Hong Kong enterprises and professional services in exploring B&R business opportunities.

The Belt and Road Summit (Summit), organised by the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau (CEDB) and the Hong Kong Trade Development Council, has been recognised by our country as a case of significance for the implementation of the B&R Initiative. The ninth Summit, held in September this year, attracted around 6 000 government officials, business leaders and representatives of enterprises from over 70 B&R-related countries and regions, and over 800 one-on-one business matching sessions were arranged for more than 280 projects, to assist Hong Kong enterprises to interface with enterprises from the Mainland and B&R countries to jointly explore business opportunities.

The Chief Executive led a business delegation to visit Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam in July this year to enhance co-operation in different areas between Hong Kong and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. A total of 55 memoranda of understanding and agreements were signed. In addition, the Financial Secretary led a delegation of the financial and innovation sectors to Saudi Arabia in October to strengthen and deepen the connections between Hong Kong and the Middle East in areas such as trade, finance, and innovation and technology. The Belt and Road Office (BRO) of the CEDB and the Ministry of Commerce also co-led a business delegation to visit Hungary and Kazakhstan in May this year, and returned via Xinjiang, encouraging Hong Kong and Mainland enterprises to jointly explore the B&R markets.

Next year, we plan to organise a B&R cross-professional forum to conduct high-level exchanges with Hong Kong professionals, focusing on exploring opportunities in new co-operation fields, including green development as well as innovation and technology, with a view to promoting Hong Kong professional services.

At the same time, BRO will explore the feasibility of establishing a B&R

capacity building centre to link up with a series of other B&R platforms created by Hong Kong, with a view to forging ties with the B&R countries and regions using our soft power in a range of professional services, thereby paving the way early for pursuing opportunities in economic development and co-operation in the future.

Inspection of aquatic products imported from Japan

In response to the Japanese Government's plan to discharge nuclear-contaminated water at the Fukushima Nuclear Power Station, the Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene issued a Food Safety Order which prohibits all aquatic products, sea salt and seaweeds originating from the 10 metropolis/prefectures, namely Tokyo, Fukushima, Ibaraki, Miyagi, Chiba, Gunma, Tochigi, Niigata, Nagano and Saitama, from being imported into and supplied in Hong Kong.

For other Japanese aquatic products, sea salt and seaweeds that are not prohibited from being imported into Hong Kong, the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department will conduct comprehensive radiological tests to verify that the radiation levels of these products do not exceed the guideline levels before they are allowed to be supplied in the market.

As the discharge of nuclear-contaminated water is unprecedented and will continue for 30 years or more, the Government will closely monitor and step up the testing arrangements. Should anomalies be detected, the Government does not preclude further tightening the scope of the import ban.

From noon on November 19 to noon today (November 20), the CFS conducted tests on the radiological levels of 221 food samples imported from Japan, which were of the "aquatic and related products, seaweeds and sea salt" category. No sample was found to have exceeded the safety limit. Details can be found on the CFS's thematic website titled "Control Measures on Foods Imported from Japan" (www.cfs.gov.hk/english/programme/programme_rafs/programme_rafs_fc_01_30_Nuclear_Event_and_Food_Safety.html).

In parallel, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) has also tested 50 samples of local catch for radiological levels. All the samples passed the tests. Details can be found on the AFCD's website (www.afcd.gov.hk/english/fisheries/Radiological_testing/Radiological_Test.html).

The Hong Kong Observatory (HKO) has also enhanced the environmental

monitoring of the local waters. No anomaly has been detected so far. For details, please refer to the HKO's website (www.hko.gov.hk/en/radiation/monitoring/seawater.html).

From August 24, 2023, to noon today, the CFS and the AFCD have conducted tests on the radiological levels of 101 258 samples of food imported from Japan (including 64 975 samples of aquatic and related products, seaweeds and sea salt) and 22 612 samples of local catch respectively. All the samples passed the tests.

CAD reminds public of establishment of temporary restricted flying zone

The Civil Aviation Department (CAD) today (November 20) reminded the public that a temporary restricted flying zone (RFZ) will be established in the area around the China Merchants Wharf from tomorrow (November 21) to November 25. All aircraft, including planes, helicopters and small unmanned aircraft (SUA), will be restricted from entering the area concerned. Other flying activities will also be restricted within the temporary RFZ.

"To facilitate arrangements for a special operation, the CAD will establish a temporary RFZ in the area around the China Merchants Wharf (see the area indicated by a red dotted line in the attachment) with effect from 9am tomorrow to 4pm on November 25. No aircraft will be permitted to enter the zone, except for Government Flying Service flights.

Other flying activities, such as the flying of model aircraft, kites and captive balloons and mass release of small balloons etc, will also be restricted within the temporary RFZ," a spokesman for the CAD said.

Airlines and pilots have been informed of the establishment of the temporary RFZ via the Notice to Airmen. The CAD has also announced the details of the temporary RFZ on the electronic portal for small unmanned aircraft "eSUA".