

LCQ12: Food Truck Pilot Scheme

Following is a question by the Hon Yiu Si-wing and a written reply by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Edward Yau, in the Legislative Council today (June 23):

Question:

In February 2017, the Government launched a two-year Food Truck Pilot Scheme (Pilot Scheme) and in October last year it extended the Scheme, for the second time, to February 2, 2022. It is learnt that due to the impacts of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 epidemic and the closure of tourism facilities, etc., the flow of people in the operating venues of food trucks has been decreasing, and the business of food trucks is on its last legs. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the current number of licensed food trucks; whether it knows the number of operation days and the turnover of each food truck, in each month since January last year;

(2) of the designated operating venues for food trucks which, since January last year, have ever been closed under the impact of the epidemic and the respective dates of closure; whether the Government has provided alternatives to assist operators of food trucks in continuing their operation; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(3) whether it will consider extending the Pilot Scheme again; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(4) whether it has, in the light of the current difficult operating environment, modified the mechanism for withdrawal and replacement of food trucks; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The two-year Food Truck Pilot Scheme (the Scheme) was launched on February 3, 2017 and has been extended for two more years till February 2, 2021 for the first time. Having regard to the impact of the COVID-19 epidemic on food truck operation and having evaluated the development of the Scheme so far, the Government has extended the Scheme again for another year up to February 2, 2022.

My reply to the question raised by the Hon Yiu Si-wing is as follows:

(1) There are currently 12 licenced food trucks in operation under the Scheme. According to the statements of account submitted by the food truck operators, the gross revenue of food trucks from January 2020 to late May

2021 was about \$2.67 million. The number of operating food trucks, their gross revenue and the total number of operation days are presented on a quarterly basis in the table below:

| Quarter | Average number of operating food trucks per month (Note 1) | Average |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| January – March 2020 | 3 | 120 |
| April – June 2020 | 3 | 50 |
| July – September 2020 | 3 | 35 |
| October – December 2020 | 4 | 220 |
| January – March 2021 | 4 | 280 |
| April – June 2021 (up to late May) | 5 | 280 |

(2) There are currently 12 operating venues under the Scheme. Since the outbreak of the epidemic at the beginning of last year, eight operating venues were closed from time to time for implementing social distancing measures. The dates of closure of the concerned venues are summarised in the table below:

| | Operating venues | Dates of closure period due to the epidemic |
|----------|------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. | Hong Kong Disneyland (HKDL) | January 26 – June 17, 2020; July 15 – September 24, 2020; December 2, 2020 – February 18, 2021 |
| 2. | Ocean Park Hong Kong (OP) | January 26 – June 12, 2020; July 14 – September 17, 2020; December 2, 2020 – February 17, 2021 |
| 3. | Hong Kong Science Museum | January 29 – June 21, 2020 |
| 4. | Hong Kong University of Science and Technology | January 29 – May 30, 2020 |
| 5. 6. | Salisbury Garden Tsim Sha Tsui Art Square (TSTAS) | January 29 – June 21, 2020; July 15 – September 27, 2020; December 14, 2020 – March 22, 2021 |
| 7. | Wong Tai Sin Square | January 29 – June 21, 2020 |
| 8. | Jockey Club HKFA Football Training Centre (HKFTC) | March 1 – July 10, 2020; July 15 – October 17, 2020; December 2, 2020 – February 26, 2021 |

The four remaining venues, namely West Kowloon Cultural District (WKCD), Energizing Kowloon East Venue 1, Golden Bauhinia Square and Central Harbourfront Event Space remained open during the epidemic.

Although all the 12 operating venues are open at present, food trucks have only operated in HKDL, HKFTC, TSTAS and WKCD.

In view of the impact of the epidemic on food truck operation, the Government has offered 50 per cent rental concession to food trucks operating at its venues from October 2019 to March 2020 and then increased the rental concession to 75 per cent from April 2020 till September 2021; HKDL and OP have offered 20 per cent and about 30 per cent rental concession to food trucks operating at their venues from December 2019 and November 2019 till September 2021 respectively. The Tourism Commission (TC) will continue to maintain communication with food truck operators to facilitate their operation.

(3) The Scheme originally scheduled to expire on February 2 this year has been extended to February 2, 2022, allowing food trucks to continue their operation for another year. The Scheme has been in operation for more than four years. Food trucks as a tourism facility in Hong Kong are facing a number of operation difficulties. In order to maintain fair competition, food trucks are required to operate at designated locations and maintain certain distance with nearby catering outlets. In addition, locations of food truck pitches should not cause obstruction to people or traffic flow and there should be electricity and other support services provided by the venue management for food trucks. Food truck business is also significantly affected by the weather. Besides, there are many restaurants in Hong Kong and the competition is keen. Food trucks as a tourism facility in Hong Kong has limited room for development. The TC is critically reviewing the data and the effectiveness of the Scheme so as to determine its way forward and does not rule out the possibility of bringing the Scheme to an end eventually.

(4) As set out above, in view of the impact of the epidemic on food truck operation, the Government and other venue management have offered rental concession to food trucks. If a food truck operator decides to withdraw from the Scheme, he/she should surrender the Food Factory Licence and Special Purpose Vehicle (Food Processor) Licence to the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department and the Transport Department respectively and terminate the agreements with the operating venues according to the established procedures. The TC will assist the operators on licences and agreements matters. The way forward of the Scheme would be subject to a critical review. The TC will not accept any new application for food truck operation to fill any vacancies.

Note 1: Since there had been only one food truck operating in certain months and the revenue and operation days of food truck are business sensitive information, the TC presented the average figures on a quarterly basis in the table.

Note 2: Since there had been more than one food truck operating in certain months, the average number of total operation days per month for some quarters will be more than 31 days.