

LCQ13: Treatment of food waste

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Chun-ying and a written reply by the Secretary for Environment, Mr Wong Kam-sing, in the Legislative Council today (January 20):

Question:

The quantity of food waste discarded by Hong Kong people each day exceeds 3 600 tonnes, accounting for some 30 per cent of the total municipal solid waste volume. The Government has implemented the Pilot Scheme on Food Waste Collection (the Pilot Scheme) since July 2018, with a view to devising the arrangements for the collection of food waste from the establishments in the commercial and industrial (C&I) and the public sectors, as well as the delivery of such food waste to the Organic Resources Recovery Centre (ORRC) at Siu Ho Wan, so as to tie in with the commissioning of the first phase of ORRC in the same month. Although ORRC has a food waste treatment capacity of 200 tonnes each day, the quantity of food waste collected each day on average through the Pilot Scheme in 2019 only amounted to about 100 tonnes, representing just half of the design treatment capacity of ORRC. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it has conducted a review on the effectiveness of the Pilot Scheme in the collection of food waste; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) whether the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) has assessed if the proportion of C&I establishments participating in the Pilot Scheme is on the low side; if the EPD has assessed and the outcome is in the affirmative, whether the EPD will introduce measures to raise the participation rate; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) given that the second phase of the Pilot Scheme was rolled out at the end of last year, under which domestic food waste will also be progressively collected in addition to the collection of food waste from establishments in the C&I and the public sectors, and the EPD will invite the participation of more stakeholders, including all private and public housing estates with experience in source separation of food waste, whether the EPD has provided incentives to encourage the participation of more private and public housing estates; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

My reply to the various parts of the question raised by the Hon Chan Chun-ying is as follows:

(1) and (2) The Chief Executive announced in the Policy Agenda in 2018 that a pilot scheme would be introduced to examine the feasibility of implementing

government-run food waste collection services in the long run.

The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) has launched the first phase of the Pilot Scheme on Food Waste Collection (the Pilot Scheme) since July 2018, focusing on food waste generated from the commercial and industrial (C&I) and public sectors with a view to drawing up the major operation and logistics arrangements for the collection and delivery of food waste to the first phase of the Organic Resources Recovery Centre (ORRC) which commenced operation in the same month. To date, the Pilot Scheme covers over 70 public venues, including venues under the Hospital Authority, the Hong Kong Housing Authority, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department and the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD). Since April 2019, the EPD has also provided free food waste collection services for some primary and secondary schools through school lunch suppliers. In addition, about 120 establishments voluntarily collect, source-separate and deliver their food waste to the ORRC for recycling on a daily basis.

Local economic activities are significantly affected amid the COVID-19 pandemic, leading to a drop in the overall quantity of food waste generated in Hong Kong. However, under the Pilot Scheme, the ORRC still manages to receive around 90 to 100 tonnes of food waste each day, and the quantity rises to nearly 110 tonnes recently.

While taking forward the Pilot Scheme, we have been collecting the views of participants. Most of them give positive and active feedbacks and are willing to continue with their support. Some have suggested that food waste collection services of a larger scale will help encourage more establishments to practise food waste separation and recycling. Experience gained from the Pilot Scheme also indicates that side-loader tanker trucks are preferred to traditional tail-lift vehicles for food waste collection as more food waste can be collected with a higher efficiency in its collection and delivery. Moreover, time schedules on food waste collection services have to be adjusted to meet the operational needs of different C&I establishments.

(3) With tender invitation started at the end of last year, we are going to roll out the second phase of the Pilot Scheme on a larger scale progressively this year to cover more areas. We will also extend the scope of collection to domestic food waste gradually. Some 150 more venues have expressed interest in joining the second phase, including catering facilities of community service organisations, shopping centres and wet markets in public housing estates, canteens in government and tertiary institution premises, more public markets and cooked food venues managed by the FEHD and hospitals. Furthermore, we will invite all public and private housing estates with experience in source separation of food waste to participate in the second phase. To date, 21 housing estates have expressed interest in joining and we welcome more to join. We will also continue to solicit support from the C&I sector.

Learning from the experience of the first phase, we will use side-loader tanker trucks as far as practicable and choose the appropriate time for collecting food waste in a more flexible manner to cope with the specific constraints of individual venues. To enhance collection efficiency, we will

also closely liaise with parties such as food waste generators and property management companies (PMCs) to devise food waste collection arrangements that best suit service users' and residents' needs.

To invite participation from more public and private housing estates, the Recycling Fund (the Fund) of the EPD has launched solicitation theme for projects related to food waste to encourage the recycling sector to initiate business on food waste collection and delivery to food waste treatment facilities, as well as to adopt new technologies and equipment to enhance the efficiency in collecting and treating food waste. It also subsidises projects in using smart recycling bins for collecting food waste at housing estates, with a view to further enhancing the effectiveness of food waste recycling. In 2020, two major private housing estates in the Tai Po District and Eastern District and two villages in the Tai Po District were subsidised by the Fund to purchase a number of green facilities, including smart recycling bins to assist in the source separation of food waste and other recyclables.

The EPD will assist the PMCs of housing estates in publicising the free Pilot Scheme to their residents and recruiting participants, providing guidelines to educate their residents on the proper separation of domestic food waste and sending them relevant information, and identifying suitable food waste collection methods as well as planning the collection procedures and arrangements.