

## LCQ14: Hawker Assistance Scheme

Following is a question by the Hon Ho Kai-ming and a written reply by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, in the Legislative Council today (October 31):

Question:

Under the Hawker Assistance Scheme (the Scheme) launched by the Government in June 2013, hawker licensees of about 4 300 fixed-pitch hawker stalls in 43 hawker areas might choose to apply for a relocation cum reconstruction grant or surrender of their licences to the Government for an ex-gratia payment of \$120,000. The Scheme expired in June this year. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the respective numbers of applications for surrender of hawker licences received and approved by the Government under the Scheme;
- (2) of the number of pitches available for allocation (except those unsuitable for allocation due to safety reasons) in the 43 hawker areas upon expiry of the Scheme, with a breakdown by district and hawker area;
- (3) of the respective total numbers of licensed hawkers in the 43 hawker areas (i) before the launch and (ii) upon expiry of the Scheme, with a breakdown by district and hawker area; and
- (4) as the Government indicated at a committee meeting of this Council that it would consider re-issuing the surrendered hawker licences for application by interested parties, of the timetable and progress of the work concerned, and whether the trade and the public will be consulted on the relevant arrangements; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

To reduce the fire risks posed by on-street hawking activities, the Government obtained funding approval of \$230 million from the Legislative Council (LegCo) Finance Committee on March 15, 2013 for a five-year Hawker Assistance Scheme (the Scheme) for the licensed hawkers in 43 fixed-pitch hawker areas in the territory. The Scheme aims to improve the fire resisting design and capability of hawker stalls, and to relocate stalls away from staircase discharge points of buildings or emergency vehicular access.

The Scheme covers the following scope:

- (a) Hawkers who are required by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) to relocate their stalls for fire safety reasons may apply for a one-off relocation cum reconstruction grant to dismantle their old stalls and build new ones at the newly assigned pitch spaces to meet the fire-resisting specifications drawn up by the FEHD in consultation with the Fire Services

Department and the Buildings Department;

(b) Hawkers who are not required to relocate their stalls under (a) may apply for a one-off in-situ reconstruction grant to carry out partial or full reconstruction of their stalls in-situ to meet the prescribed fire-resisting specifications for reducing fire risks; and

(c) An ex-gratia payment (EGP) of \$120,000 will be paid to hawkers (except for those whose licences are newly issued pursuant to the hawker licensing policy review in 2008-09) who opt for voluntary surrender of their hawker licences to the Government. This helps expedite the release of vacant pitches and hence facilitates the relocation of stalls which pose higher fire risks. Hawkers who have obtained a one-off grant for relocation cum reconstruction or in-situ reconstruction of their stalls under the Scheme will not be eligible for EGP, if they surrender their hawker licences subsequently.

The Scheme commenced on June 3, 2013 and ended on June 2, 2018 (i.e. closed for applications).

My reply to the various parts of the question is as follows –

(1) Among the 4 330 licensed fixed-pitch hawkers in the 43 hawker areas, FEHD received applications from 854 hawkers for surrender of hawker licences for EGP in the five-year Scheme period. The approval procedures for all applications had been completed and the stalls were vacated. Besides, FEHD received 422 applications for relocation cum reconstruction grant and 3 002 applications for in-situ reconstruction grant to upgrade the fire safety standards of hawker stalls. In other words, 98.8 per cent of the licensed hawkers in the 43 hawker areas had joined the Scheme since its commencement.

(2) In processing the applications for surrender of hawker licences for EGP, some of the hawker pitches vacated were deleted as they were located directly in front of staircase discharge points of adjacent buildings or emergency vehicular access. Some other hawker pitches vacated were used to accommodate hawker stalls which were originally located directly in front of staircase discharge points of adjacent buildings or emergency vehicular access or those stalls necessary to be relocated for other reasons or used for the purpose of rationalising the overall layout of the hawker areas. Due to fire safety considerations, vacated hawker pitches which were located within six-metre radius in front of the staircase discharge points of buildings were unsuitable for re-use. As a result, as at August 31, 2018, there are a total of 237 vacant hawker pitches which can be used for reallocation under the Scheme. Details are set out in Annex I. At present, FEHD is collating figures on hawker pitches within or outside the 43 hawker areas which are vacated due to other reasons. As a rough estimate, the number of vacant pitches available for allocation amounts to almost 400.

(3) The number of hawkers in the 43 hawker areas before and after the Scheme is set out in Annex II.

(4) At present, the Government has commenced consultation work in relation to the issue of new fixed-pitch hawker licences and the allocation of vacant

fixed pitches. Also, meetings were held with the stakeholders (including the trade) to listen to their views. Given the limited number of vacant fixed pitches, the principles of fairness, impartiality and openness should be adopted in allocating the pitches. The Government will later report to the LegCo Panel for Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene on the latest development and recommendations.