

LCQ14: Public markets in New Territories West and the Islands District

Following is a question by the Hon Leung Che-cheung and a written reply by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, in the Legislative Council today (October 23):

Question:

Regarding the public markets located in New Territories West and the Islands District, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as the Chief Executive stated in last year's Policy Address that the Government would build a public market in Tin Shui Wai and Tung Chung respectively, of the progress of the relevant work, the views collected from local consultations, and whether such views will be adopted;

(2) in respect of the public markets under the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) and the Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA) that are located in New Territories West and the Islands District, of the (i) number of stalls, (ii) number of vacant stalls and (iii) vacancy rate of the stalls, in each of the past two years (set out in tables of the same format as Table 1);

Table 1

Year: _____

Managing authority	District	Name of market	(i)	(ii)	(iii)

(3) in respect of the stalls that were not let out in each of the past five years in public markets under FEHD and HA that are located in New Territories West and the Islands District, of (i) the total floor area, (ii) the duration for which the stalls had not been let out, (iii) their existing uses and (iv) their future uses (set out in tables of the same format as Table 2); and

Table 2

Year: _____

Managing authority	District	Name of market	(i)	(ii)	(iii)	(iv)

(4) of the policies and measures in place to tackle the situation in which some stalls, in those markets with high occupancy rates, are not in operation or in an inactive state for a prolonged period of time; whether it has assessed the effectiveness of such policies and measures?

Reply:

President,

Having consulted the Transport and Housing Bureau, my reply to the various parts of the question is as follows:

(1) As announced in the 2018 Policy Address, the Government plans to build new public markets at the section of Tin Fuk Road in Tin Shui Wai and Tung Chung Town Centre respectively. Well-connected by public transport and located in the vicinity of MTR stations and public transport interchanges, these two new market sites are convenient and easily accessible to members of the public. We consulted the Islands District Council and Yuen Long District Council in October last year on the Tung Chung Town Centre and Tin Shui Wai new market projects respectively, and received Members' support in general.

We are working with relevant departments in taking forward these two new market projects. According to the preliminary planning, the new markets will be air-conditioned with brand new designs, modern management and diversified trade mix of goods, so as to provide more choices and better shopping experience to the public in purchasing fresh food. These two projects are at the planning stage now. We will provide details of the projects upon completion of technical feasibility studies and cost-effectiveness assessment.

In addition, considering that it takes time to build the new public market in Tin Shui Wai, the Government has announced the establishment of a temporary market at the open space adjacent to Tin Sau Road Park so that members of the public can have an additional choice for purchasing fresh food early. We will adopt an innovative concept to construct and operate the Tin Shui Wai temporary market, including the Modular Integrated Construction method to shorten construction time with a view to meeting the target of completion in about one year.

We will continue to maintain liaison with stakeholders and consult the relevant District Councils on the progress of the new market projects as appropriate.

(2) and (3) Information concerning vacancy rate of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) markets in New Territories West and the Islands Districts is provided at Annex A. As for markets under the Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA), there are six markets in New Territories West and Islands Districts directly managed and let to individual stall operators by HA (not including markets rented under single-operator arrangement). The vacancy rate of these markets is at Annex B. FEHD and HA do not keep consolidated statistical information on the vacancy duration.

(4) FEHD has introduced a standard clause in all tenancy agreements since 2005, requiring its tenants not to cease or suspend the operation of the stall for seven days or more within one calendar month except with the written permission of the Government.

In addition, to strengthen enforcement actions against the non-active operation of stalls, FEHD has set up additional task force teams to assist in the enforcement and operation work in the district markets. From January 2018 to September 2019, a total of 1 643 verbal warnings and 1 884 warning letters against non-active operation of stalls have been issued, and tenancy agreements of 61 market stalls have thus been terminated.

According to the tenancy agreements (TA) signed between HA and tenants of individual stalls, the tenants should ensure that their business days and hours are in compliance with the tenancy terms. Should there be any breach of the tenancy terms, HA reserves the right to terminate the tenancy.

Estate management staff will carry out regular inspections of the markets to ensure that tenants are in compliance with the requirements of the TA. In the past two years, HA did not find any stall not in operation for a prolonged period in the above-mentioned six markets which were under HA's direct management.