

LCQ7: Purchase of petrol by practitioners of agricultural and fisheries industry

â€‹Following is a question by the Hon Steven Ho and a written reply by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, in the Legislative Council today (September 29):

Question:

Some practitioners of the agricultural and fisheries industry have relayed to me that as some oil companies no longer sell petrol in bulk after the disturbances arising from the opposition to the proposed legislative amendments erupted in 2019, it is difficult for them to use agricultural and fisheries machinery powered by petrol (e.g. plowing machines, and petrol outboard engines used in fishing vessels) and they need to switch to other modes of operation, resulting in an increase in costs and a significant impact on their livelihood. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the existing legislation regulating oil companies' sale of petrol in bulk, and the measures in place to prevent lawbreakers from purchasing petrol in bulk for criminal purposes;

(2) whether it knows (a) which oil companies currently sell petrol in bulk to practitioners of the agricultural and fisheries industry and the related arrangements (including (i) whether documentary proof is required to be produced when purchasing petrol, and (ii) whether a restriction has been imposed on the purchase quantity), and (b) if the locations of the petrol filling stations concerned are convenient for practitioners of the agricultural and fisheries industry;

(3) whether it will assist practitioners of the agricultural and fisheries industry in purchasing petrol more conveniently, such as issuing them with relevant documentary proof, and discussing with oil companies the streamlining of the relevant arrangements; and

(4) whether it has assessed if the eight Designated Bunkering Areas (DBAs) currently set up in Hong Kong waters can facilitate the operation of practitioners of the fisheries industry, and whether it will consider afresh setting up more DBAs?

Reply:

President,

According to the Security Bureau, the purchase of petrol in bulk for

criminal purposes by lawbreakers may contravene the offence of "possessing anything with intent to destroy or damage property" under section 62 of the Crimes Ordinance (Cap. 200). The law enforcement agencies will deal with it in accordance with the law with regard to the actual circumstances. During the black-clad violence in 2019, the Government reminded oil companies to refrain from selling petrol in bulk to suspicious persons.

As far as we understand, currently persons engaging in the agriculture and fisheries industries are able to buy petrol in bulk to meet their daily operational needs at some petrol filling stations by presenting confirmation letters issued by oil company or using credit cards. If persons engaging in the agriculture and fisheries industries encounter difficulties in buying petrol in bulk, relevant departments are prepared to liaise with oil companies and explain to them the Government's requirements, with a view to minimising the impact of the above on the trade as far as possible.

According to the Transport and Housing Bureau, there are currently eight Designated Bunkering Areas (DBAs) within Hong Kong waters for oil carriers to supply bunker to vessels. These DBAs are located near the major berthing places for local vessels (including fishing vessels) to meet their operational needs. The Government currently has no plan to establish new DBAs in the near future.