

Working Group submits final report on compliance with requirement on air change or air purifiers in catering premises to Government

The Secretary for Food and Health stipulated in March a requirement on air change or air purifiers to be complied with in dine-in catering premises in the directions in relation to the catering business under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Requirements and Directions) (Business and Premises) Regulation (Cap. 599F). The Working Group established for the smooth implementation of the requirement has submitted its final report to the Government, summarising its work and outcome over the past nine months and providing insights on anti-epidemic strategy.

The Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, today (December 16) expressed heartfelt gratitude to the Working Group, under the chairmanship of Professor Yuen Pak-leung and with the support from its members who are experts in their respective professional disciplines, for the strong commitment and commendable efforts in assisting the smooth and expeditious implementation of the requirement.

She added that the final report has shed light on the pathways for further actions and helped galvanise other parties into action for delivering a better-ventilated indoor environment by minimising the viral load in the air, thereby safeguarding public health and enabling society and the economy to resume normal.

The Chairman, Professor Yuen Pak-leung, said that it was with great pleasure that he presented the final report, which has crystallised Working Group members' experience into insights for future knowledge and experience sharing purposes. He also took the opportunity to express thanks to all concerned, including Working Group members, representatives of the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department and the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD), and the relevant trades, for their assistance and co-operation with the Working Group in bringing into fruition better-ventilated catering premises with resilience to rise above challenges in testing times.

The Chair of Infectious Diseases in the Department of Microbiology of the University of Hong Kong, Professor Yuen Kwok-yung, also conveyed appreciation to the Working Group for setting an exemplary role model and convincing other relevant stakeholders to join this important initiative.

The Working Group issued "A Guide on Compliance with the Requirement on Air Change/Air Purifiers in Seating Areas of Dine-in Catering Premises" earlier in April to provide specific technical details in an in-depth yet user-friendly manner to enable the trades to master the essential points and facilitate expeditious follow-up arrangements, so as to facilitate the prompt

implementation of the requirement.

Since March, the Working Group has released a list of air purifiers that met the specified specifications for reference by catering premises operators and ventilation works contractors. There are a total of 464 air purifiers on the list up to now.

It is noted that as at November 30, over 18 200 food premises which had registered with the FEHD as required were confirmed to have met the requirement. Among these, over 2 000 food premises had air change per hour (ACH) at six or above, more than 16 000 food premises had installed air purifiers, and 128 food premises met both the ACH and air purifier requirements. The FEHD will advise new applicants intending to submit an application for a licence for operating food business with seating area to achieve the threshold of ACH at six under the prevailing Cap. 599F.

With the final report, the Working Group wishes to consolidate the experience gained and share its collective insight, in case this would be of use when parties concerned wish to chart the way forward as further findings from scientific research are unveiled. Knowledge/experience sharing sessions and close liaison among parties concerned in various sectors might help keep the current knowledge base and facilitate further pursuit of the engineering approach on handling air change. It also hopes that Hong Kong's experience in this issue could help reinforce the due attention and importance to be accorded by various international professional organisations (in areas such as public health, engineering and building) to the engineering control approach on handling air change.

For details of the final report, members of the public can browse the FEHD website (www.fehd.gov.hk/english/licensing/guide_general_reference/InfoAirChange.html).