

## **New Agriculture Policy – Supportive Measures and Implementation Plan**

### **SUMMARY**

Local agriculture has a long history in supplying good quality fresh agricultural produce for local consumption. However, concomitant with Hong Kong's economic development and population growth, the agricultural sector has been diminishing over time. Hong Kong has become increasingly reliant on imports for food supply. Noting the growing aspiration of our citizens favouring a more balanced development of our city and the increased level of interest in local agriculture, the Government sees a strong case for adopting a more proactive policy on agriculture. We conducted a public consultation in the first quarter of 2015 on the objectives of a new policy on local agriculture and how the objectives should be achieved given Hong Kong's highly urbanised and service-oriented circumstances.

2. The public consultation indicated wide support for the New Agriculture Policy (NAP) that the Government has proposed, notwithstanding Hong Kong's economic positioning as a trade and financial hub. There is a general recognition that the benefits of agriculture go beyond the local provision of food as an alternative to imports. They can encompass intangible yet no less important values such as sustainable development as well as more balanced and healthy development of our community.

3. The essence of the NAP is to promote the modernisation and sustainable development of local agriculture through inducing the enhanced competitiveness of local farms and the use of quality agricultural land for agricultural purpose. Measures that will be adopted to achieve these objectives are :

#### Setting up an Agricultural Park (Agri-Park)

- (a) to help nurture agro-technology and agro-business management, as well as to facilitate knowledge transfer with a view to enhancing productivity. It may also serve to accommodate eligible farmers who are displaced by Government land development projects;
- (b) to provide for an Agri-Park of 75-80 hectares (ha) through resuming

farmland to the extent that is still in private ownership; and

- (c) to provide basic lodging and storage facilities to tenants of the Agri-Park under the tenancy agreement;

#### Conducting a Consultancy Study on Agricultural Land

- (d) to explore the feasibility and merits of identifying and designating “Agricultural Priority Areas” (APAs) in order to incentivise their use for long-term agricultural purposes; and
- (e) to set up a cross-bureau/department steering committee led by the Food and Health Bureau and the Development Bureau to oversee the consultancy study;

#### Setting up a Sustainable Agricultural Development Fund (SADF)

- (f) to provide financial support for promoting research and development for the application of technology in agricultural production, facilitating the transfer of knowledge, enhancing manpower training, improving agricultural infrastructure, strengthening marketing and branding of local agricultural produce, assisting farmers to mechanise and modernise their farming equipment and facilities, as well as pursuing projects aimed at promoting agricultural rehabilitation; and
- (g) subject to the approval of the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council (LegCo), to inject an amount of \$500 million into the SADF;

#### Facilitating Development of Hydroponics and Agro-technology

- (h) to explore feasible ways to facilitate establishment of hydroponics or other similar operations in industrial buildings, e.g. reviewing the land planning regime to permit such uses on industrial zones subject to fire and building safety consideration;

#### Facilitating Leisure Farming Ancillary to Agriculture

- (i) to examine complementary facilitation measures in terms of planning control and land use to enhance the economic return of local agriculture; and
- (j) to explore measures to allow catering services of a limited scale and erection of farm structures to the extent that such will not detract from the primary focus on agriculture;

### Enhancing Food Safety and Marketing of Local Fresh Produce

- (k) to put in place a suitable framework that would not be overly burdensome while enabling us to enhance food safety at source; and
- (l) to explore additional marketing channels for local fresh produce.

4. In preparation for the establishment of the Agri-Park, we plan to commission an engineering feasibility study in early 2016 to, among others, set the initial boundary of the Park and draw up the detailed implementation plan. We would endeavour to commission the consultancy study on the APA initiative within 2016. In parallel, we plan to seek LegCo Finance Committee's approval for establishing the SADF in the first half of 2016, with a view to launching the SADF within 2016. Other initiatives and facilitative measures will be launched in stages depending on their complexity, respective procedural requirements as well as the availability of manpower and other resources.

**Food and Health Bureau  
Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department  
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