

**Thirty-fifth Meeting of
the Business Facilitation Advisory Committee**

***Agenda Item 3(a) : Report on the work of the
Wholesale and Retail Task Force***

Purpose

This paper reports the work of the Wholesale and Retail Task Force (WRTF) since the last Business Facilitation Advisory Committee meeting held on 30 March 2017.

Work progress of WRTF

Technology Voucher Programme

2. At the WRTF meeting held on 19 June 2017, the Innovation and Technology Commission (“ITC”) briefed the Task Force on the implementation of the Technology Voucher Programme (“TVP”). The \$500 million TVP was launched under the Innovation and Technology Fund in November 2016 to subsidise small and medium enterprises (“SMEs”) in using technological services and solutions to improve productivity, or to upgrade or transform business processes. ITC provided WRTF with comprehensive information on the eligibility for application, mode and scope of funding, assessment procedures, monitoring and funding disbursement arrangement, as well as the latest position of the TVP.

3. WRTF welcomed the Government’s initiative to help SMEs to enhance competitiveness through the use of technologies. Noting that the TVP was at the initial stage of implementation, WRTF supported ITC’s plan to liaise with chambers of commerce to promote and explain the details of the TVP to SMEs.

Public Consultation for the Proposed Amendments to the Food Adulteration (Metallic Contamination) Regulations

4. With a view to better protecting public health, facilitating effective regulation and promoting harmonisation between local and international

standards, the Government proposes to enhance and update the Food Adulteration (Metallic Contamination) Regulations (Regulations). At the same meeting on 19 June 2017, the Food and Health Bureau (FHB) and the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) jointly briefed WRTF on the proposed amendments.

5. In gist, the proposed amendments aim to update the existing food descriptions in the Regulations, to specify maximum levels (MLs) for food items by adopting the internationally recognised and followed reference Codex MLs; and where no relevant Codex ML is available, to establish ML for specific food items in Hong Kong wherever appropriate. The legislative proposals will be finalised for submission to the Legislative Council after the 3-month public consultation period which was commenced on 6 June 2017. A grace period would be allowed for the trades and relevant sectors to get prepared before the Amendment Regulations comes into effect.

6. WRTF appreciated that the Government would take into consideration of relevant trades' views before finalizing the proposed amendments and also allow for a grace period.

Implementation of the Code of Practice for Holders of Wholesale Dealer Licence under the Pharmacy and Poisons Ordinance

7. At the same meeting on 19 June 2017, the Department of Health (DH) briefed WRTF on the implementation of the Code of Practice for holders of Wholesale Dealer Licence under the Pharmacy and Poisons Ordinance (CoP).

8. When consulted on the draft CoP in 2014 and 2015, WRTF had provided their views and suggested the Government to conduct a review in due course after its implementation. Subsequently, the CoP came into effect in October 2015, and DH has reviewed the implementation progress in 2016.

9. DH informed WRTF that the general compliance of the CoP was satisfactory although some areas for improvement were observed. DH will organize briefing sessions to share with the trade of their observations so as to enhance compliance.

10. WRTF thanked DH for their follow-ups on the Task Force's suggestion.

Way forward

11. Members are invited to note the work progress of WRTF. WRTF will continue to monitor the development of the above issues.

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