

**Business Facilitation Advisory Committee
Food Business and Related Services Task Force**

Brief on the Implementation Progress of Introducing a “Professional Certification System” for Food Business Related Licences and Relaxing the Restrictions on Types of Food Items Sold by Light Refreshment Restaurants

Purpose

This paper briefs members on the implementation progress of the two new measures of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) in introducing a “Professional Certification System” (PCS) for the issue of food business related licences and relaxing the restrictions on types of food items sold by light refreshment restaurants (LRRs).

Background

“Professional Certification System”

2. With a view to streamlining licence application procedures and shortening the processing time, the FEHD put into place the above two measures from 1 March 2023 to reform the food business licensing regime. The FEHD introduced a PCS for licences for LRRs and food factories (FFs) first on a pilot basis to encourage early compliance with the licensing requirements by the applicants and enable the trade to have a better grasp of the time required for obtaining full licences. Applicants may choose to apply for the issue of full licences through either the current system or the PCS.

3. The PCS adopts an approach of “licence first, inspection later” for the issue of full licences. The FEHD accepts a Certificate of Compliance and final layout plans issued by an authorised person or a registered structural engineer as the certification for compliance with all health requirements for the issue of a full licence, provided that all licensing requirements imposed by other relevant government departments have already been met. After issuing the full licence, the FEHD staff will conduct on-site audit checks on the premises’ compliance with all health requirements.

Relaxing the Restrictions on Types of Food Items Sold by LRRs

4. To increase the operation flexibility of LRRs, the FEHD relaxed on 1 March 2023 the restrictions on types of food items sold by LRRs on the premise that food safety and environmental hygiene are not compromised. Restrictions are imposed on the cooking activities instead. The new measure is applicable to all new and under processing LRR licence applications. Current LRR licensees who wish to switch to the mode of operation under the new regime may apply for an amendment to the specified groups of food items on their existing licences. They may also choose to adhere to their original mode of operation, i.e. selling food items of a specified group.

Progress of Implementation of the New Measures

5. The implementation of the two new measures has been generally smooth. Currently, among 1 600 applications for LRR and FF licences are under processing, a total of 2 applicants have chosen to obtain their full LRR/FF licences through the PCS. Besides, as at 28 February 2023, there were about 4 300 licensed LLRs and around 350 food premises under application for LRR licences. After the implementation of the new measure, 6 licensed LRRs and 34 food premises under application for LRR licences have applied for amending the specified groups of food items respectively.

6. Upon acquiring sufficient experience, the FEHD will review the effectiveness of the new measures. The timing of the review depends on the proportion of licence applicants opting for the PCS. Subject to the smooth implementation of the PCS and support from the trade, the Department will consider extending the new regime to other food business licences as soon as possible.

Advice Sought

7. Members are invited to note and comment on the contents of this paper.

Food and Environmental Hygiene Department
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