Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2010-11

Reply Serial No.

FHB(FE)056

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION

Question Serial No.

0570

Head: 48 Government Laboratory

Subhead (No. & title): 661 Minor plant, vehicles and equipment (block vote)

Programme:

Controlling Officer: Government Chemist

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Food and Health

Question:

The estimate for Subhead 661 for 2010 represents an increase of more than $7.7 million over the revised estimate for the previous year (i.e. 2009-10). What are the items to be replaced and procured? What are their life expectancies?

Asked by: Hon. LI Wah-ming, Fred

Reply:

The equipment to be procured under Subhead 661 in 2010-11 is listed below –

For Replacement

- an electron spin resonance spectroscopy system;

- an integrated high performance liquid chromatography system with diode array detector and mass spectrometric detector;

- a gas chromatography system;

- a liquid chromatography-mass spectrometry system;

- a gas chromatograph with mass spectrometry system;

- a pyrolysis gas chromatography mass spectrometer system;

- a high performance liquid chromatograph coupled with diode array detector system;

- a gas chromatographic system equipped with an oxygen selective flame ionisation detector;

- a set of automatic ion analyser (flow injection analyser) system;

- a UV/Visible spectrophotometer;

- an inductively coupled plasma-optical emission spectrometer; and

- an integrated gas chromatography system with mass spectrometry detector.

New Acquisition

- a set of equipment for the compliance tests of proprietary Chinese medicines in accordance with quality specifications upon the commencement of s119 under the Chinese Medicine Ordinance (Cap. 549); and

- an isoteniscope system.

The estimated useful life of the above equipment is normally seven years.

Signature _____

Name in block letters Dr LAU CHAU MING

Post Title Government Chemist (Acting)

Date 15.3.2010

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2010-11

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION

Reply Serial No.

FHB(H)153

Question Serial No.

0979

Head: 48 Government Laboratory Subhead (No. & title):

Programme: (1) Statutory Testing

Controlling Officer: Government Chemist

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Food and Health

Question:

The Government will allocate an additional funding of $27 million for the work of statutory testing in the coming year. The funding includes the provision for procurement of capital equipment and for creation of 12 posts to strengthen the regulation of pharmaceutical products and proprietary Chinese medicines. Under Matters Requiring Special Attention in 2010-11, the Government Laboratory will, among other things, provide analytical support to further strengthen the regulation of pharmaceutical products and proprietary Chinese medicines and expedite the setting of standards for Chinese herbal medicines commonly used in Hong Kong. Please advise on the details of the work concerned and whether the Government has any plan to introduce new regulation on pharmaceutical products and proprietary Chinese medicines. If yes, please advise on the direction and timetable for implementation of the regulation.

Asked by: Hon. FANG Kang, Vincent

Reply:

In 2010-11, additional resources will be allocated to the Government Laboratory (GL) to enhance its services to support the regulation of pharmaceutical products and proprietary Chinese medicines. Measures will include more stringent pre-market and post-market control of pharmaceutical products, and commencement of the remaining provisions under the Chinese Medicine Ordinance related to mandatory registration of proprietary Chinese medicines. GL would also conduct inter-laboratory verification work to support the Department of Health (DH) in the development of standards for Chinese herbal medicines commonly used in Hong Kong. DH has already developed standards for 60 herbal medicines and will continue to develop the standards for another 140 by 2012.

Signature _____

Name in block letters Dr LAU CHAU MING

Post Title Government Chemist (Acting)

Date 15.3.2010

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2010-11

Reply Serial No.

FHB(FE)092

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION

Question Serial No.

0980

Head: 48 Government Laboratory Subhead (No. & title):

Programme: (1) Statutory Testing

Controlling Officer: Government Chemist

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Food and Health

Question:

In 2009-10, Government Laboratory continued outsourcing some of the routine food testing work to commercial testing laboratories. Please set out the outsourced routine food testing work, figures on the work outsourced to each commercial testing laboratory and the details of outsourcing planned to be conducted in 2010-11, as well as the manpower and resources involved as a result of a reduction in the workload of Government Laboratory after an increase in outsourcing.

Asked by: Hon. FANG Kang, Vincent

Reply:

In 2009-10, about 79 000 tests (7 400 samples) of routine food testing work have been outsourced to three local private laboratories through 10 separate contracts. Details of the contracts are as follows:

	Contracts	Total in contract tests (samples)	Contract period
1	Testing of preservatives in general foodstuff	5 950 (850)	Apr 09 to Sep 09
2	Testing of preservatives in food products	5 700 (950)	Oct 09 to Mar 10
3	Testing of preservatives in beverages	1 800 (300)	May 09 to Jul 09
4	Testing of preservatives in preserved fruits and vegetables	2 400 (400)	Sep 09 to Dec 09
5	Testing of sulphur dioxide in food	1 200 (1 200)	Apr 09 to Mar 10
6	Testing of metallic contamination in fruits and vegetables	8 400 (1 200)	Apr 09 to Mar 10
7	Testing of heavy metals in aquatic products and miscellaneous foods	8 488 (1 384)	Apr 09 to Mar 10
8	Testing of organochlorine pesticide residues in fruits and vegetables (20 parameters)	5 000 (250)	May 09 to Aug 09
9	Testing of organochlorine pesticide residues in fruits and vegetables (35 parameters)	14 000 (400)	Aug 09 to Mar 10
10	Testing of organophosphorus pesticides and pyrethroids in fruits and vegetables	26 000 (500)	Oct 09 to Mar 10
	Total	78 938 (7 434)	

In 2010-11, the amount of outsourcing will be increased to about 107 000 tests (11 500 samples). The scope will be extended to cover new test parameters including melamine, boric acid, propionic acid, nitrate/nitrite, Sudan dyes, malachite green and chloramphenicol.

The resources released from the outsourcing of routine food testing work are deployed to focus on new test method development, to cope with new testing work arising from amendments of food legislation and perform other duties including management of outsourcing activities, handling analytical tests for urgent food incidents as well as chemical metrology work and enhancing the

testing capability of the local laboratories.

Signature _____

Name in block letters Dr LAU CHAU MING

Post Title Government Chemist (Acting)

Date 15.3.2010

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2010-11

Reply Serial No.

FHB(FE)014

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION

Question Serial No.

1255

Head: 48 Government Laboratory Subhead (No. & title):

Programme: (1) Statutory Testing

Controlling Officer: Government Chemist

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Food and Health

Question:

With the introduction of the Nutrition Labelling Scheme and food safety legislation, what does the Administration assess the number of food samples to be tested and the funding requirements in the next three years (i.e. 2010-11 to 2012-13) to be? What is the estimated number of accredited laboratories which will enter the market and provide food testing services in the same period? What are the initiatives, estimated funding and staff establishment in connection with promoting and monitoring the food testing industry?

Asked by: Hon. CHEUNG Yu-yan, Tommy

Reply:

The total number of food samples to be collected by the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) for surveillance testing will be around 65 000 samples each year in the coming three years, including samples related to nutrition labelling and other statutory compliance testing. A financial provision of $52.7 million has been earmarked for food surveillance work of the CFS in 2010-11. As for the Government Laboratory (GL), a financial provision of $56.1 million has been earmarked for food testing work in 2010-11. The funding requirement for 2011-12 and 2012-13 will be reviewed nearer the time.

There are now 14 local private laboratories which have been accredited by the Hong Kong Accreditation Service (HKAS) for conducting various types of food tests. In 2008 and 2009, there were four accredited private laboratories which extended their scope of accreditation to food testing and one new private laboratory which obtained accreditation for food testing. The number of new laboratories will depend on a number of factors, such as the market demand for testing services, the existing and future capacity of existing service providers, and their capability in using new technology to maintain their competitiveness. With the commencement of the legislative work for the Food Safety Bill as well as the progressive setting of various food safety standards, it is believed that more private laboratories may also enter the food testing market and obtain relevant accreditation from the HKAS.

Starting from 2009-10, the Government has allocated $1.6 million per year to HKAS to strengthen its accreditation service for food testing. HKAS is now able to carry out on-site assessments within two weeks of receiving an application. HKAS will also raise the standard of accredited food testing laboratories and promote the use of accredited food testing services through organising seminars, conference and workshops in conjunction with other organisations, such as the GL and the CFS.

The GL also helps enhance the capability of the local food testing industry by sharing testing methods through conducting technical seminars, proficiency tests and inter-laboratory comparison studies on a more regular basis, as well as undertaking more chemical metrology work. In addition, GL will increase outsourcing of routine food testing work from about 79 000 tests in 2009-10 to 107 000 tests in 2010-11 with funding increasing from $7 million to $11.8 million. The outsourcing is opened to laboratories that have obtained accreditation from HKAS in the test parameters concerned and maintain the accreditation status throughout the contract period. During the contract period, GL would undertake a number of quality

assurance measures including on-site audits and quality control means such as introduction of blind samples/split samples and control checks to monitor the performance of the contract laboratories including the quality of the test results as well as review of test data. An Outsourcing Management Section was established in 2009-10 to perform the above activities. The Section consists of seven professional and technical staff with annual expenditure $4.1 million.

Signature _____

Name in block letters Dr LAU CHAU MING

Post Title Government Chemist (Acting)

Date 15.3.2010

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2010-11

Reply Serial No.

FHB(FE)057

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION

Question Serial No.

1443

Head: 48 Government Laboratory Subhead (No. & title):

Programme: (1) Statutory Testing

Controlling Officer: Government Chemist

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Food and Health

Question:

With respect to the outsourcing of some of the routine food testing work to the commercial sector, please provide the following information :

(a) the scope of food testing and the number of samples outsourced in the past two years (i.e. 2008 and 2009) and expected to be outsourced in 2010, as well as the respective ratio of outsourcing.

(b) the expenditure incurred in the past two years (i.e. 2008-09 and 2009-10) and the estimated expenditure to be incurred in 2010-11 for the outsourcing of food testing.

(c) the cost of testing after outsourcing in the past two years (i.e. 2008-09 and 2009-10) and the estimated cost of testing after outsourcing in 2010-11.

(d) the manpower and expenditure involved for supervising and spot-checking the outsourcing work in the past two years (i.e. 2008-09 and 2009-10) and the estimated manpower and expenditure for such purposes in 2010-11.

(e) the resources and manpower released from the outsourcing exercise in 2009-10 and the re-deployment arrangement of such resources and manpower.

Asked by: Hon. CHEUNG Yu-yan, Tommy

Reply:

(a) The information on outsourcing of routine food testing work is as follows:

	No. of Tests	% of Routine Work	Test Area
2008-09 (actual)	22 000 (2 900 samples)	15%	sulphur dioxide, preservatives, pesticide residues
2009-10 (estimated)	79 000 (7 400 samples)	50%	sulphur dioxide, preservatives, trace metals, pesticide residues
2010-11 (estimated)	107 000 (11 500 samples)	70%	preservatives, trace metals, other additives and contaminants, pesticide and veterinary drug residues

(b) The expenditure on outsourcing is as follows:

	Expenditure on Outsourcing
2008-09 (actual)	$1.5 million
2009-10 (projected)	$7 million
2010-11 (estimated)	$11.8 million

(c) The cost per test varies to a great extent according to the test parameter. It is noted that there has been a reduction in cost for some of the test parameters in the private sector due to competition among private laboratories since the commencement of the outsourcing exercise in 2008-09. However, for the new parameters introduced to the outsourcing exercise in 2010-11 where fewer laboratories are accredited for such testing service, the cost may be higher.

(d) The Outsourcing Management Section was established in 2009-10 to perform outsourcing related activities including contract management and monitoring the performance of the contract laboratories. The Section consists of seven professional and technical staff with annual expenditure $4.1 million.

(e) The resources released from the outsourcing of routine food testing work are deployed to focus on new test method development, to cope with new testing work arising from amendments of food legislation and to perform other duties including management of outsourcing activities, handling analytical tests for urgent food incidents as well as chemical metrology work and enhancing the testing capability of the local laboratories.

Signature _____

Name in block letters Dr LAU CHAU MING

Post Title Government Chemist (Acting)

Date 15.3.2010

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2010-11

Reply Serial No.

FHB(FE)058

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION

Question Serial No.

1446

Head: 48 Government Laboratory Subhead (No. & title):

Programme: (1) Statutory Testing

Controlling Officer: Government Chemist

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Food and Health

Question:

What is the number of food samples for regulatory compliance purposes in 2008-09 and 2009-10?

Asked by: Hon. CHEUNG Yu-yan, Tommy

Reply:

The number of food tests (with the corresponding number of food samples in bracket) for regulatory compliance purposes conducted by the Government Laboratory for the years 2008, 2009 and the estimated output for 2010 is as follows:

2008 (actual)	2009 (actual)	2010 (estimated)
127 006 tests (29 321 samples)	175 761 tests (29 294 samples)	163 000 tests (30 000 samples)

Signature _____

Name in block letters Dr LAU CHAU MING

Post Title Government Chemist (Acting)

Date 15.3.2010

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2010-11

Reply Serial No.

FHB(FE)059

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION

Question Serial No.

1447

Head: 48 Government Laboratory Subhead (No. & title):

Programme: (1) Statutory Testing

Controlling Officer: Government Chemist

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Food and Health

Question:

What was the expenditure of the Food Safety Laboratory in 2008-09 and 2009-10? What is the current staff establishment? What are the estimated expenditure and manpower in 2010-11?

Asked by: Hon. CHEUNG Yu-yan, Tommy

Reply:

The Food Safety Laboratory under the Government Laboratory is currently staffed by 30 professional and technical officers with an expenditure of $36 million for 2008-09, a projected expenditure of $23 million for 2009-10 and an estimated expenditure of $25 million for 2010-11. There is no change in the staffing for the year 2010-11. Expenditure for the Food Safety Laboratory is higher in 2008-09 as more capital expenditure was incurred for procurement of equipment when the Laboratory was opened in 2008.

Signature _____

Name in block letters Dr LAU CHAU MING

Post Title Government Chemist (Acting)

Date 15.3.2010

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2010-11

Reply Serial No.

FHB(FE)060

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION

Question Serial No.

1448

Head: 48 Government Laboratory Subhead (No. & title):

Programme: (1) Statutory Testing

Controlling Officer: Government Chemist

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Food and Health

Question:

What was the average turn around time for the testing of a food complaint case in 2009? As food complaints are closely related to the operational crisis of the trade, is there any room for further shortening the current target testing time of 25 working days?

Asked by: Hon. CHEUNG Yu-yan, Tommy

Reply:

In 2009, the average sample turn around time for the testing of a food complaint case was 20 working days, shorter than the target testing time of 25 working days.

The sample turn around time for testing varies according to the nature of the complaint cases that governs the types of tests required for the investigation. For example, for cases involving deteriorated food samples, the turn around time may be as short as four to six working days. On the other hand, for cases requiring detailed investigation using a variety of techniques such as those involving suspected foreign substances, the sample turn around time may take as long as two to three months.

Government Laboratory always strives at providing a timely testing service by streamlining work processes and adopting new technology whenever applicable. The target testing time will therefore be kept under constant review for shortening where possible.

Signature _____

Name in block letters Dr LAU CHAU MING

Post Title Government Chemist (Acting)

Date 15.3.2010

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2010-11

Reply Serial No.

FHB(FE)061

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION

Question Serial No.

1449

Head: 48 Government Laboratory Subhead (No. & title):

Programme: (1) Statutory Testing

Controlling Officer: Government Chemist

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Food and Health

Question:

The Labelling Scheme on Nutrition Information is to take effect on 1 July 2010. In this connection, what are the estimated increase in the number of testings and the additional expenditure and manpower required?

Asked by: Hon. CHEUNG Yu-yan, Tommy

Reply:

The number of food samples that the Centre for Food Safety will collect and send to the Government Laboratory for testing of nutrient content is about 400 samples in the coming year. The additional work involved will be absorbed by existing manpower and resources.

Signature _____

Name in block letters Dr LAU CHAU MING

Post Title Government Chemist (Acting)

Date 15.3.2010

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2010-11

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION

Reply Serial No.

FHB(H)235

Question Serial No.

1531

Head: 48 Government Laboratory Subhead (No. & title):

Programme: (1) Statutory Testing

Controlling Officer: Government Chemist

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Food and Health

Question:

Under this Programme, 29 000 tests on pharmaceuticals (quality control) will be performed in 2010, a remarkable increase over 25 728 tests performed in 2009. Does the Administration have sufficient manpower and resources to cope with the increase in the number of tests? What are the details?

Asked by: Hon. LEE Kok-long, Joseph

Reply:

To cater for the increase in the number of tests on pharmaceutical products, there is an additional provision in 2010-11 of $4.613 million out of which $2.746 million is reserved for personal emoluments and $1.867 million for other costs. Six civil service posts viz. two Chemists, one Science Laboratory Technologist, one Science Laboratory Technician I and two Science Laboratory Technician IIs will be created. Besides, a set of major instruments costing a total of $7.6 million will also be acquired by the Government Laboratory.

Signature _____

Name in block letters Dr LAU CHAU MING

Post Title Government Chemist (Acting)

Date 15.3.2010

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2010-11

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION

Reply Serial No.

FHB(H)113

Question Serial No.

1532

Head: 48 Government Laboratory Subhead (No. & title):

Programme: (1) Statutory Testing

Controlling Officer: Government Chemist

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Food and Health

Question:

Under this Programme, 12 posts will be created for strengthening the regulation of pharmaceutical products and proprietary Chinese medicines. Please give details on the nature, ranks, remuneration and duties of the posts to be created.

Asked by: Hon. LEE Kok-long, Joseph

Reply:

To cater for the increase in workload arising from strengthening the control on pharmaceutical products and proprietary Chinese medicines, 12 additional posts will be created in 2010-11. The breakdown of the new posts is as follows-

Number of staff	Rank	Duties	Total Personal Emolument ($)
3	Chemist	To take charge of the Unit of the Section and be responsible for the examination of pharmaceutical products/proprietary Chinese medicines. To supervise Science Laboratory Technician Is and IIs.	1,971,540
2	Science Laboratory Technologist	To assist the Chemists in undertaking tedious and complicated method development work and be responsible for the provision and co-ordination of all technical services needed for the general house-keeping of the Section.	1,059,720
3	Science Laboratory Technician I	To assist the Chemist in the management of the Unit, to check test results submitted by Science Laboratory Technician IIs, and to undertake the regular maintenance of laboratory equipment. To carry out analysis of routine and non-routine samples.	1,206,720

4	Science Laboratory Technician II	To carry out analysis of routine samples under the supervision of the Chemist.	1,000,080

Signature _____

Name in block letters Dr LAU CHAU MING

Post Title Government Chemist (Acting)

Date 15.3.2010