

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

EEB(F)049

(Question Serial No. 0173)

Head: (48) Government Laboratory

Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not Specified

Programme: (1) Statutory Testing

Controlling Officer: Government Chemist (Dr LEE Wai-on)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Environment and Ecology

Question:

Please provide the following information:

1. the respective expenditure of the Food Safety Laboratory in each of the past 2 years (i.e. 2023 and 2024), the current staff establishment and the estimated expenditure and manpower for 2025;
2. the number of food samples tested for regulatory compliance in each of the past 2 years (i.e. 2023 and 2024) and the estimated number for 2025; and
3. with respect to the outsourcing of some of the routine food testing work to the private sector, the scope of food testing and the number of samples outsourced, the respective ratio of outsourcing, the expenditure incurred for the outsourcing of food testing, and the manpower and expenditure involved for supervising and spot-checking the outsourcing work in each of the past 2 years (i.e. 2023 and 2024) and the estimated data for 2025.

Asked by: Hon CHEUNG Yu-yan, Tommy (LegCo internal reference no.: 14)

Reply:

1. The expenditure of the Food Safety Laboratory (FSL) under the Government Laboratory (GL) was \$49 million in 2023-24. The revised estimate for 2024-25 is \$54 million. Currently, the FSL has a staff establishment of 34 professional and technical officers. The estimated expenditure for 2025-26 is \$51 million and the staff establishment remains unchanged.
2. The numbers of food tests (with the corresponding numbers of food samples in brackets) for regulatory compliance purpose conducted by the GL in 2023 and 2024, and the estimated number for 2025, are as follows:

2023 (actual)	2024 (actual)	2025 (estimated)
194 778 tests (29 115 samples)	196 563 tests (30 296 samples)	190 000 tests (30 000 samples)

3. The scope and number of samples outsourced for food testing in 2023-24 and the estimated numbers for 2024-25 and 2025-26 as well as the respective ratios of outsourcing are provided in the table below:

Financial year	Number of food tests outsourced (number of samples involved)	Percentage	Scope of food testing outsourced
2023-24	128 500 (17 100 samples)	70%	preservatives, sulphur dioxide, boric acid, propionic acid, nitrate and nitrite, colouring matter, trace metals, pesticide residues, veterinary drug residues and other food contaminants
2024-25 (estimated)	129 000 (18 400 samples)	70%	- ditto -
2025-26 (estimated)	129 600 (18 800 samples)	70%	- ditto -

The expenditure on outsourcing of food testing in 2023-24 was \$12.5 million. The estimated expenditure for 2024-25 and 2025-26 are both \$12.5 million.

A management section comprising 7 professional and technical officers was established under the GL to perform the aforementioned outsourcing tasks, including contract management and monitoring the performance of the contract laboratories. The expenditure of the section for 2023-24 was \$6.1 million, while the estimated expenditures for 2024-25 and 2025-26 are \$6.4 million and \$6.6 million respectively.

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