

Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department

Environmental Report for 2006

Our Profile

The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) provides services to the public in connection with agriculture and fisheries, nature conservation and animal, plant and fisheries regulation. We have three programme areas. The aim of each programme area is summarized as follows –

- i) Agriculture, Fisheries and Fresh Food Wholesale Markets
 - ◆ To facilitate agricultural and fisheries production and improve productivity.
- ii) Country and Marine Parks and Nature Conservation
 - ◆ To conserve flora, fauna and natural habitats; to designate and manage country parks, special areas, marine parks and marine reserves; and to control international trade in endangered species of animals and plants in Hong Kong.
- iii) Animal, Plant and Fisheries Regulation and Technical Services
 - ◆ To monitor the welfare of, and control the diseases in, animals and plants through enforcement of relevant legislation; protect public health; protect and regulate fisheries; and provide technical services.

We are responsible for the management and operation of the Hong Kong Wetland Park, Endangered Species Resources Centre, Lion Nature Education Centre, Fisheries Education Centre, Tai Lung Experimental Station, Tai Lung Veterinary Laboratory, 23 Country Parks, four Marine Parks, one Marine Reserve, four Animal Management Centres and three Wholesale Food Markets.

As at March 2006, we had 1 883 staff working at our headquarters in Cheung Sha Wan Government Offices and over 50 outstations throughout the territory. Our establishment ceiling for 2006-07 was \$393.7 million.

Our Commitment

We are committed to ensure that the community can enjoy a reliable and plentiful supply of safe and high quality fresh food and a well managed natural environment, which we can pass on to our future generations.

Our Environmental Policy

We aim to achieve our environmental goal by –

- i) promoting the production of fresh food in a sustainable and environmentally responsible way; and
- ii) conserving and enhancing our natural environment.

Our Environmental Objectives

In implementing this policy, we will –

- i) develop and promote technology in agriculture and fisheries production which is environmentally responsible;
- ii) conserve and manage the natural environment through the identification, designation and management of country and marine parks, special areas and marine reserve;
- iii) conserve local flora, fauna and their natural habitats through law enforcement and provide conservation advice on development proposals and planning studies;
- iv) conserve endangered species through controlling their international trade;
- v) fully comply with environmental legislation and adopt environmentally responsible practices in daily operations; and
- vi) regularly review the efficient use of resources and seek improvement to reduce the environmental impacts in our operations.

Our Environmental Performance

We have launched various programmes to bring about environmentally responsible practices and sustainable use of natural resources in agriculture and fisheries. Highlights of 2006 are set out below –

- ◆ The "Accredited Vegetable Farm Scheme" continued to promote good horticultural practices and proper use of pesticides. In 2006, the total number of accredited farms in Hong Kong was 180, covering about 69 hectares of farming area.
- ◆ To promote local organic agriculture, the Organic Farming Support Service provided technical support to 72 local organic farms covering about 34 hectares of farming area.
- ◆ The Committee on Sustainable Fisheries was set up in December 2006 to formulate the long term goals and directions for the sustainable development of the fishing industry and to conserve fisheries resources in Hong Kong waters.
- ◆ In 2006 the government raises the capital of the Fisheries Development Loan Fund from \$100 million to \$290 million to promote sustainable fisheries development, of which \$250 million is to help fishermen switch to sustainable fisheries or related operations and \$40 million is to help fish farmers to develop sustainable aquaculture businesses.
- ◆ The department vigilantly enforces against destructive fishing practices, such as fishing with explosives, toxic substances, electricity, dredging and suction devices. During the year, 1 376 patrols were conducted to combat destructive fishing.
- ◆ The department continues to promote the enhancement of fisheries habitats and resources through deployment of artificial reefs. A total of 1 318 m³ of artificial reefs were deployed in

2006.

- ◆ The Fisheries Education Centre has been set up in the Aberdeen Fisheries Office to promote public awareness of the need and importance for fisheries conservation. During the year, the Centre received over 4 000 visitors.
- ◆ Environmental friendly practices are being promoted among fish farmers, such as the use of pellet feed to replace trash fish. Of the 1 079 mariculture farms, some 360 have adopted the practice in 2006.
- ◆ The trial conducted at Kau Sai Fish Culture Zone has shown that specially designed artificial reefs, acting as biofilters, have led to the establishment of a rich fish community and helped remove organic wastes and improved seabed environment within the fish culture zones. Sham Wan and Lo Tik Wan Fish Culture Zones have been identified as suitable sites for further biofilter deployment.

We have introduced various measures to conserve biodiversity and protect natural habitats. We also designate and manage country parks, special areas, marine parks and marine reserve so as to conserve and enhance our natural environment. The following projects were carried out in 2006 –

- ◆ 903,000 tree seedlings were planted at various country parks to rehabilitate areas damaged by hill fires and soil erosion. Seedlings of native species were also planted within plantations of exotic species to enrich their species diversity and ecological value.
- ◆ Efforts were made to enhance the diversity of flora and fauna in country parks. Ecological enhancement sites were purposely built to attract various wildlife. For instance, artificial wetlands were constructed for attracting aquatic wildlife. Attempts were also made to breed rare fish species at artificial wetlands and the results were encouraging. Self interpretative signs and displays were installed to provide basic information

of the wildlife and plants found at these sites.

- ◆ 158 environmental impact assessment applications and studies on development projects were handled.
- ◆ Conservation and management projects were undertaken in the Mai Po Inner Deep Bay Ramsar Site.
- ◆ Removal of invasive exotic mangrove species was continued in the Inner Deep Bay area.
- ◆ A territory-wide ecological survey is in progress with a view to develop a comprehensive ecological database for Hong Kong. An internet-based database, The Hong Kong Biodiversity Online (www.hkbiodiversity.net), which documents basic biological and ecological information of more than 1000 animal species, is now available for public browsing.
- ◆ Field guides and newsletters on biodiversity of Hong Kong were also published.
- ◆ A Butterfly Garden was established at the Shing Mun Country Park to attract both target species for conservation purpose and other common species for the public to enjoy butterflies watching.
- ◆ Our Endangered Species Resource Centre continued to serve as the site to promote public awareness of the need for the protection of endangered species. During the year, over 7 300 visitors visited the Resource Centre.
- ◆ A variety of education and publicity programmes on endangered species protection were organized, including seminars/talks, exhibitions, as well as a radio play competition.
- ◆ The enforcement momentum to curb illegal trade in endangered species was maintained. 163 prosecutions in respect of illegal import, export or possession of endangered species were made.

- ◆ The Hong Kong Wetland Park (HKWP) was opened to the public on 20 May 2006. The Park attracted about 900,000 visitors by end of December 2006.
- ◆ A variety of school and public education programmes on wetland conservation have been carrying out. In 2006, about 3200 education activities were organized at the HKWP for about 97,000 students and the public.
- ◆ The “Wetland Park Volunteer Scheme” continued to promote direct involvement of the public in wetland conservation works. More than 2,300 volunteers registered and participated in various conservation works in wetlands.
- ◆ During the year, the HKWP recorded about 161 species of birds, 31 species of dragonflies, 87 species of butterflies, 5 species of amphibians, 4 species of reptiles and other wildlife. The high number of species recorded demonstrated the effective ecological mitigation functions at the Park.

To comply with environmental legislation and reduce environmental impacts of our operations, we have adopted various measures to ensure that our operations are environmentally responsible –

- ◆ Use manual sectional switches to turn off parts of the lighting and mechanical ventilation systems in those areas exposed to sunlight and natural flow of air as appropriate.
- ◆ Adjust the condensing water temperature of the cooling system, reduce the air conditioning pumps / machine numbers and shorten the operation hours for air conditioning facilities as far as the normal operation was not affected.
- ◆ Inactivate / remove surplus lighting, replace lamp bulbs with lower watt and energy efficient model and adjust the lighting hours of specific zones according to the actual operational needs.
- ◆ Partition centralized air conditioning areas and shorten air

conditioning hours in non-essential zone such as common areas, offices, etc. in major sites such as our Tai Lung Veterinary Laboratory.

- ◆ Increase the awareness and participation of clients and staff in green management issues by training, such as sharing sessions to reinforce green practice in daily operations.

Our Green Housekeeping System

We set up our green management system in 1994. A Green Manager is appointed to coordinate the green housekeeping efforts in the Department. Together with representatives of our five functional Branches, the Green Manager is a member of the Green Management Committee, which is chaired by a Directorate Officer to steer the development, implementation and monitoring of green office practices and to promote environmental awareness among staff.

To assist the Green Manager in the daily monitoring and implementation of agreed green policy and practices, a group of Assistant Green Managers, who are usually officers in charge of outstations, have also been appointed. They are required to monitor the green housekeeping performance of their premises and report monthly.

To further strengthen the system and explore improvement opportunities for ensuring the green targets are achieved, Environmental Audit Teams have been formed since 2000. Led by the Green Management Committee members, the Audit Teams are tasked to carry out green audits in various office premises. Committee members, as Leaders of the Audit Teams, are required to report their audit results at regular Committee meetings.

Cultivating a Green Culture

We are committed to cultivating a green culture in our workplace. Green tips and relevant information are uploaded to the departmental intranet for access by all staff members. Colleagues are also encouraged to attend training and workshops on green management and conservation.

The principles of reduce, reuse and recycle are practiced in our offices to economise the use of resources and reduce wastage and pollution. Examples are –

- i) Economise the Use of Paper
 - ◆ Use both sides of paper.
 - ◆ Cut down on photocopying.
 - ◆ Default double-sided printing for all network printers at HQ office.
 - ◆ Discard use of fax leader pages.
 - ◆ Use electronic mail and soft copies within and outside the department for exchange of documents.
 - ◆ Reduce the number of copies for distribution/circulation, if hard copy is absolutely needed.
 - ◆ Reduce the use of envelopes and re-use envelopes.

- ii) Energy conservation
 - ◆ Check vehicles regularly to ensure that they are in good conditions to enhance fuel efficiency.
 - ◆ Control fuel consumption by encouraging staff to share pool car for duty visits and site visits.
 - ◆ Use public transport whenever possible.
 - ◆ Switch off electrical appliances when staff leave the office.
 - ◆ Individual light zones are controlled by different light switches.
 - ◆ Lower the illumination level of the offices where appropriate.
 - ◆ Shorten the central lighting hours.
 - ◆ Shade sun-exposed windows and keep exterior doors/windows closed as much as possible.
 - ◆ Maintain room temperature of all air-conditioned office premises at 25.5°C during summer months.
 - ◆ Use manual sectional switches to turn off parts of the lighting and mechanical ventilation systems in those areas of the wholesale food markets exposed to sunlight and natural flow of air as appropriate.

- iii) Waste minimization and recycling

- ◆ Use refillable ball pens.
- ◆ Separate collection of used and waste paper.
- ◆ Encourage staff to use their own cups instead of paper cups.
- ◆ Minimize use of products which are not environmentally friendly such as correction fluid.
- ◆ Re-use loose minute jackets.
- ◆ Proactively inform other departments/bureaus the minimum number of hard copies of reports, newsletters, circulars, publications, etc. required and request soft copies whenever feasible.
- ◆ Introduce recycle bins in offices to encourage separation of wastes (paper, plastic bottles, aluminum cans, CDs and stationary) for recycling since 2002.

In 2003, the Government set the saving targets of electricity and paper consumption for all bureaux and department at an average of 1.5% and 2.5% per year respectively over four years, with 2002 as the base year. Although we could manage to achieve savings in these aspects up to 2005, our saving efforts were offset by the increase in electricity and paper consumption after the full operation of the Hong Kong Wetland Park in mid 2006 as well as other special and emergency operations during the year. In spite of this, we will continue to make our best endeavours in the coming year to ensure cost-effective use of resources.

To provide staff with a healthy workplace and in support of the Government's smoke-free workplace policy, we have prohibited smoking in all workplaces in this Department since 1 April 1996, including both office and non-office environment.

The Way Forward

To further enhance our green performance, we will continue to explore opportunities to apply saving measures in our offices. We will engage consultants to conduct energy audits at venues of high consumption in 2007 and explore the possibility of installing photovoltaic panels at outstation premises where possible.

Since the three wholesale markets accounted for over 50% of our total electricity consumption during the year, we will continue to explore all possible energy saving measures in the markets. One of our focuses will be the possible improvement in motor efficiency given the fact that electric motors are the major prime movers of various mechanical systems such as HVAC system, water pumping system, sewer treatment plant system & etc in our markets. We anticipate that savings from this aspect can be substantial.

In order to enhance colleague's awareness of resources efficiency, we will also launch a commendation scheme to commend staff's contribution and achievement in resources saving and waste reduction by setting good examples and fostering good habits in the workplace.

Comment and Suggestion

We welcome your comment and suggestion to further improve our green performance. You may send us your views through any of the following channels --

Post : 5/F, Cheung Sha Wan Government Offices,
303 Cheung Sha Wan Road,
Kowloon.

Fax : 2311 3731

Telephone : 2708 8885
(24-hour Interactive Voice Response System)

Email : mailbox@afcd.gov.hk