

## **ADDITIONAL CHECKS ON FOOD ESTABLISHMENTS BY AUTHORITIES WILL COMPLETE BY YEAR-END**

*NEA tightens Food Hygiene Officers Scheme, NEA and AVA enhance food hygiene penalty regime for significant food poisoning incidents*

**Singapore, 21 December 2018** – The National Environment Agency (NEA) and the Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority of Singapore (AVA) have completed most of the stepped-up inspections on food establishments that provide catering services and other premises with substantial catering operations during this festive period, and will complete these inspections by end of the year. These inspections are in addition to the regular inspections of the 40,700 food establishments in Singapore, that take place throughout the year. Regular year-end advisories to food operators have been issued to remind them to adhere to good hygiene practices during food preparation and handling. In addition, on 11 Dec 2018 and 13 Dec 2018, NEA conducted face-to-face engagement sessions with key representatives from the Association of Catering Professionals Singapore (ACAPS) and the Restaurant Association of Singapore (RAS) respectively to further reinforce the importance of food hygiene and safety.

2. NEA and AVA take a serious view of any hygiene lapses that may directly or indirectly result in food poisoning incidents. Following the recent food poisoning incidents, the authorities will continue to place implicated premises under close surveillance and work with them to improve their food hygiene practices. To further safeguard public health and strengthen our food safety regime, both NEA and AVA have been and will continue to progressively tighten the penalty regime for food hygiene offences, especially by food establishments involved in significant food poisoning incidents.

### **New Requirement to Retrain Food Hygiene Officers**

3. NEA has schemes to assist operators in upholding good and consistent hygiene practices in their daily operations, including the Food Hygiene Officer (FHO) scheme<sup>[1]</sup> for food courts, canteens, caterers and larger restaurants, and the Food Safety Management System (FSMS) for caterers. These schemes are designed to help operators put in place adequate preventive measures and a system of supervisory checks and process monitoring, so that a high standard of food and personal hygiene are upheld by their food handlers across the various touch points, from receiving of goods, to storage and handling, to food preparation and food delivery service.

4. The role and accountability of the FHO will be tightened. In the event that the licence of a food establishment is suspended, all its Food Hygiene Officers are required to go for retraining and pass the WSQ Conduct Food & Beverage Hygiene Audit course. A suspended food establishment must have a properly trained and qualified FHO before any lifting of the suspension will be considered. This will strengthen the overall supervision of food operations at these premises.

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[1] For more information on the Food Hygiene Officer Scheme, refer to <https://www.nea.gov.sg/our-services/food-hygiene/information-for-food-hygiene-officers>

## **Enhancing Penalty Regime and Pressing for Deterrent Sentences in Court**

5. As part of the review of the overall regulatory framework to strengthen accountability of operators and ensure that food establishments take greater responsibility for the hygiene standards of their premises and operational processes, NEA and AVA will enhance the penalty regime for food establishments involved in significant food poisoning incidents. The total composition amounts will be increased and more food-operator offenders, especially those who commit serious hygiene offences, will be prosecuted in Court under the relevant legislation. These include the Environment Public Health (Food Hygiene) Regulations, the Sale of Food Act, or the Environment Public Health Act which carries a maximum penalty of a fine of \$10,000 for a first offender, and in the case of a repeat offender, a fine of \$20,000 or imprisonment of 3 months or both. In appropriate cases, NEA and AVA will also press for deterrent sentences to be imposed by the Court.

6. The above measures will take immediate effect, and they form part of the measures, including the formation of the Singapore Food Agency in 2019, to align regulatory framework including penalties and enhance regulatory oversight over all food related matters from farm to fork with the aim to further strengthening our food safety regime.

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### **About National Environment Agency**

Formed on 1 July 2002, the National Environment Agency (NEA) is the leading public organisation responsible for ensuring a clean and green environment, and the sustainable development of Singapore. Its key roles are to protect Singapore's resources from pollution, maintain a high level of public health and provide timely meteorological information. NEA also develops and spearheads environmental initiatives and programmes through its partnership with the People, Public and Private sectors. It is committed to motivating every individual to care for the environment as a way of life, in order to sustain a quality living environment for present and future generations.

### **About Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority**

The Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority (AVA) of Singapore is responsible for ensuring a resilient supply of safe food, safeguarding health and welfare of animals, safeguarding the health of plants, and facilitating agri-trade.