

Head 22 — AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND CONSERVATION DEPARTMENT

Controlling officer: the Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation will account for expenditure under this Head.

Estimate 2023–24 **\$2,037.5m**

Establishment ceiling 2023–24 (notional annual mid-point salary value) representing an estimated 2 366 non-directorate posts as at 31 March 2023 and as at 31 March 2024..... **\$945.1m**

In addition, there will be an estimated eight directorate posts as at 31 March 2023 and as at 31 March 2024.

Commitment balance..... **\$2,190.3m**

Controlling Officer's Report

Programmes

Programme (1) Agriculture, Fisheries and Fresh Food Wholesale Markets	This programme contributes to Policy Area 2: Agriculture, Fisheries and Food Safety (Secretary for Environment and Ecology).
Programme (2) Nature Conservation and Country Parks	This programme contributes to Policy Area 5: Travel and Tourism (Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism) and Policy Area 23: Environmental Protection, Conservation, Power and Sustainable Development (Secretary for Environment and Ecology).
Programme (3) Animal, Plant and Fisheries Regulation and Technical Services	This programme contributes to Policy Area 2: Agriculture, Fisheries and Food Safety (Secretary for Environment and Ecology), Policy Area 22: Buildings, Lands, Planning, Heritage Conservation, Greening and Landscape (Secretary for Development) and Policy Area 32: Environmental Hygiene (Secretary for Environment and Ecology).

Detail

Programme (1): Agriculture, Fisheries and Fresh Food Wholesale Markets

	2021–22 (Actual)	2022–23 (Original)	2022–23 (Revised)	2023–24 (Estimate)
Financial provision (\$m)	512.4	632.5	601.9 (–4.8%)	515.9 (–14.3%)
				(or –18.4% on 2022–23 Original)

Aim

- 2 The aim is to facilitate agricultural and fisheries production and improve productivity.

Brief Description

- 3 The Department's work in pursuit of its aim involves:
 - the provision of infrastructural support, technical assistance and advice, credit facilities and vocational training to local farmers and fishermen;
 - the conduct of adaptive and technical studies, as well as introduction of modern technology and practices to local farmers and fishermen to facilitate their efficient production and improve the quality of their products;
 - the planning and implementation of effective management activities and services for promoting sustainable development of the agriculture and fisheries industries;
 - the provision of administrative and technical support to the operation of the Vegetable Marketing Organization and the Fish Marketing Organization; and
 - the management of government fresh food wholesale markets.

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4 The key performance measures in respect of agriculture, fisheries and fresh food wholesale markets are:

Targets

	Target	2021 (Actual)	2022 (Actual)	2023 (Plan)
<i>Agriculture</i>				
accredited vegetable farms				
(total no.).....	305#	315	315	305
(total hectares).....	2 569β	2 573	2 573	2 569
<i>Fisheries</i>				
accredited fish farms				
(total no.).....	162α	146	158	162

The target is revised from 318 to 305 as from 2023.

β The target is revised from 2 718 ha to 2 569 ha as from 2023.

α The target is revised from 148 to 162 as from 2023.

Indicators

	2021 (Actual)	2022 (Actual)	2023 (Estimate)
<i>Agriculture</i>			
composite productivity index (100 in 1985).....	167	165	165
production			
vegetables (tonnes).....	15 300	15 100	15 100
(\$m).....	210.0	235.0	235.0
livestock (tonnes).....	21 900	22 700	22 700
(\$m).....	994.0	912.0	912.0
throughput at Vegetable Marketing Organization			
market			
(tonnes).....	68 534	58 312	57 600
(\$m).....	613.4	568.4	562.0
new loans			
(no.).....	45	38	43
(\$m).....	5.4	4.6	5.0
new grants			
(no.).....	44	24	51
(\$m).....	15.6	28.6	44.3
<i>Fisheries</i>			
production			
capture (tonnes).....	112 000	77 200	94 600
(\$m).....	2,767.0	2,170.4	2,468.7
culture (tonnes).....	3 381	2 764	3 381
(\$m).....	121.8	128.8	151.8
throughput at Fish Marketing Organization markets			
(tonnes).....	39 850	35 672	37 761
(\$m).....	3,065.6	3,037.0	3,051.3
new loans			
(no.).....	249	229	240
(\$m).....	99.8	90.2	130.0
new grants			
(no.).....	6	2	6
(\$m).....	31.1	24.4	32.0
<i>Government fresh food wholesale markets</i>			
annual throughput (tonnes).....	429 000	392 000	400 000
rental market stall space occupied (%).....	100	100	100
area of wholesale markets managed (m ²).....	287 984	287 984	287 984
requests for assistance handled (no.).....	14 300	16 973	16 500
inspections conducted daily (no.).....	215	215	215
recovery of rentable revenue in Cheung Sha Wan			
Wholesale Food Market and Western Wholesale			
Food Market (%).....	99	99	99

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Matters Requiring Special Attention in 2023–24

5 During 2023–24, the Department will focus on:

- implementing the New Agriculture Policy to proactively support the modernisation and sustainable development of local agriculture, including operation of Agricultural Park Phase 1, preparation for the establishment of the Agricultural Park Phase 2, and overseeing the consultancy study on Agricultural Priority Areas;
- taking follow-up actions on the implementation of the legislation to better regulate fishing activities in Hong Kong waters, and continuing to implement other recommendations of the Committee on Sustainable Fisheries, with the aim of conserving and restoring marine resources;
- assisting farmers in capturing high-value market niches by providing technical advice on organic cultivation and intensive greenhouse production;
- administering the Sustainable Agricultural Development Fund and Sustainable Fisheries Development Fund under the enhanced mechanism and expanded scope, to help farmers/fishermen adopt a sustainable and high value-added operation mode and subsidise relevant programmes and research so as to enhance the overall competitiveness of the industries;
- assisting fishermen in switching to sustainable fisheries operations and fish farmers in developing sustainable aquaculture through technical support services and credit facilities, including designating new fish culture zones, assisting Hong Kong fishermen to develop deep-sea mariculture locally and in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, developing modernised pond fish culture and recreational fisheries, and revitalising the Aberdeen Wholesale Fish Market;
- promoting good aquaculture practices as well as stepping up monitoring of aquaculture environment and fish health management; and
- formulating together with stakeholders a blueprint for the sustainable development of agriculture and fisheries to promote the upgrading and transformation, modernisation and sustainable development of the agriculture and fisheries industries.

Programme (2): Nature Conservation and Country Parks

	2021–22 (Actual)	2022–23 (Original)	2022–23 (Revised)	2023–24 (Estimate)
Financial provision (\$m)	905.6	966.2	907.4 (–6.1%)	1,030.6 (+13.6%)
				(or +6.7% on 2022–23 Original)

Aim

6 The aim is 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.

Brief Description

7 The Department's work in pursuit of its aim involves:

- the management and protection of country parks, special areas, marine parks and marine reserve under the Country Parks Ordinance (Cap. 208) and the Marine Parks Ordinance (Cap. 476) for the purpose of nature conservation, recreation, nature-based tourism and education;
- the conservation of biodiversity and promotion of compatible use of country and marine parks;
- the identification of sites of high scientific value for listing as Sites of Special Scientific Interest;
- the provision of nature conservation advice on development proposals, planning studies and environmental impact assessments;
- the monitoring and auditing of ecological mitigation measures for development projects approved under the Environmental Impact Assessment Ordinance (Cap. 499);
- the promotion of public awareness of nature conservation and enforcement of nature conservation legislation;
- the licensing control of international trade in endangered species and curbing of illegal trade in endangered species in Hong Kong;
- the conservation and management of the Mai Po Inner Deep Bay Ramsar Site and Sha Lo Tung;
- the management of the Hong Kong Wetland Park; and
- the management and operation of the Hong Kong UNESCO Global Geopark.

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8 The key performance measures in respect of nature conservation and country parks are:

Targets

	Target	2021 (Actual)	2022 (Actual)	2023 (Plan)
country parks and special areas managed (hectares)	44 312	44 312	44 312	44 312
marine parks and marine reserves managed (hectares)	6 117 ^γ	4 050	6 117	6 117
no. of Sites of Special Scientific Interest listed	67	67	67	67
issue of certificates in respect of endangered species (working days)	2	2	2	2

^γ The target is revised from 4 050 ha to 6 117 ha as from 2022.

Indicators

	2021 (Actual)	2022 (Actual)	2023 (Estimate)
seedlings produced	270 200	259 000	230 000
seedlings planted	261 300	249 000	220 000
ecological impact assessment applications and studies handled	177	175	170
participants in educational activities	150 000	200 000	200 000
visitors to country parks (million)	12	12	13
hill fires attended to	27	21	24
endangered species licences/certificates	13 439	12 205	12 200
endangered species inspections	22 309	20 145	20 200
endangered species prosecutions	38	48	50

Matters Requiring Special Attention in 2023–24

9 During 2023–24, the Department will focus on:

- the promotion of public education and publicity on nature conservation and compatible use of country parks and marine parks;
- overseeing the implementation of management agreement projects for nature conservation and measures to enhance biodiversity;
- taking forward the strategic feasibility study on the development of wetland conservation parks system proposed in the Northern Metropolis Development Strategy;
- implementing measures to enhance the education and recreation functions of country parks;
- continuing the designation of the proposed Robin's Nest Country Park;
- exploring the feasibility of the incorporation of selected country park enclaves into country parks;
- strengthening promotion, conservation and education of geological and cultural heritages of the Hong Kong UNESCO Global Geopark;
- strengthening the control of trade in endangered species and combatting their illegal trade and smuggling;
- continuing the designation of the proposed North Lantau Marine Park; and
- implementing measures for enhanced management of wild pigs, including the legislative amendment to the Wild Animals Protection Ordinance (Cap. 170) to increase the level of maximum penalty and introduce fixed penalty for illegal feeding of wild animals.

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Programme (3): Animal, Plant and Fisheries Regulation and Technical Services

	2021–22 (Actual)	2022–23 (Original)	2022–23 (Revised)	2023–24 (Estimate)
Financial provision (\$m)	467.9	464.2	484.2 (+4.3%)	491.0 (+1.4%)
				(or +5.8% on 2022–23 Original)

Aim

10 The aim is to safeguard the welfare of animals, and control the diseases in animals and plants through the enforcement of relevant legislation; protect public health; protect and regulate fisheries; and provide technical services.

Brief Description

11 The Department is responsible for the prevention of the introduction and spread of animal and plant diseases, safeguarding animal welfare, regulation of drug use in livestock farms, provision of services to facilitate export of plants, animals and plant/animal by-products, prevention of rabies, and enforcement of regulations pertaining to animal welfare and import requirements, fisheries protection and marine fish culture. The work involves:

- the provision of quarantine services;
- the inspection of animals and plants imported into Hong Kong;
- the prevention and control of rabies and other zoonotic diseases;
- the testing of animal diseases, including zoonotic diseases, and chemical residues in food animals;
- the inspection of farms where food animals are kept;
- the inspection of premises and establishments where animals are kept for exhibition or trading purposes;
- the inspection of marine fish culture farms;
- the control of destructive fishing practices;
- the regulation of fishing activities with the use or aid of vessels; and
- the instigation of prosecution against offenders under relevant legislation.

12 The technical services provided by the Department include:

- managing agricultural weirs;
- licensing livestock farms;
- licensing marine fish culture farms;
- registering local fishing vessels;
- facilitating export trade in plants, animals and their products;
- safeguarding public health through the control of pesticides and drug use in livestock farms;
- assessing ex-gratia payments to primary producers arising from development projects affecting agriculture and fisheries; and
- regulating credit unions and co-operative societies.

13 The key performance measures in respect of animal, plant and fisheries regulation and technical services are:

Targets

	Target	2021 (Actual)	2022 (Actual)	2023 (Plan)
<i>Animal and plant regulation</i>				
prevention				
reported cases of rabies	0	0	0	0
dogs vaccinated in strategic Rabies Control Areas (%)φ	80	80	80	80

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	Target	2021 (Actual)	2022 (Actual)	2023 (Plan)
enforcement				
issue of animal health				
certificates (working days)	2	2	2	2
issue of licences/permits				
(working days).....	3	3	3	3
issue of sanitary certificates for				
products of animal				
origin (working days)	3	3	3	3
<i>Technical services</i>				
management of agricultural weirs				
weirs to be cleansed	205	205	205	205
plant health certification				
issue of phytosanitary				
certificates (working days)	2	2	2	2
control of pesticides				
issue of pesticide				
permits (working days).....	2	2	2	2
<i>Renewal of marine fish culture licence</i>				
in person in 50 minutes (%)	100	100	100	100

φ The World Health Organization recommends a minimum of 70 per cent.

Indicators

	2021 (Actual)	2022 (Actual)	2023 (Estimate)
<i>Animal and plant regulation</i>			
prevention			
stray animals caught.....	1 490	1 179	1 200
animals vaccinated and quarantined	62 885	59 052	59 400
enforcement			
licences/permits.....	9 124	7 992	7 985
animal and plant health certificates.....	19 181	19 610	19 300
<i>Technical services</i>			
ex-gratia payment assessment			
area assessed for crop ex-gratia			
payment (hectares)Δ	78	84	115
area assessed for aquaculture fisheries ex-gratia			
payment (m ²)Δ	134 213	1 112	0
claims assessed for capture fisheries ex-gratia			
paymentΔ	155	48	3
licensing of livestock farms			
licences issued.....	30	23	21
control of pesticides			
pesticides registered	3	2	2
licences/permits issued.....	2 273	2 189	2 190
regulation of credit unions and co-operative societies			
accounts examined or audited	210	209	207

Δ The figures vary from year to year according to the Government's programme for land clearance and development works.

Matters Requiring Special Attention in 2023–24

14 During 2023–24, the Department will focus on:

- strengthening measures for stray animals management;
- strengthening promotion of animal welfare, including the preparation of legislative amendments and other measures to introduce a positive duty of care on persons responsible for animals to enhance animal welfare and further protect animals from unnecessary suffering; and
- enhancing surveillance on antimicrobial resistance and diseases in food animals in local farms.

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ANALYSIS OF FINANCIAL PROVISION

	2021–22 (Actual) (\$m)	2022–23 (Original) (\$m)	2022–23 (Revised) (\$m)	2023–24 (Estimate) (\$m)
Programme				
(1) Agriculture, Fisheries and Fresh Food Wholesale Markets	512.4	632.5	601.9	515.9
(2) Nature Conservation and Country Parks	905.6	966.2	907.4	1,030.6
(3) Animal, Plant and Fisheries Regulation and Technical Services	467.9	464.2	484.2	491.0
	1,885.9	2,062.9	1,993.5 (–3.4%)	2,037.5 (+2.2%)
				(or –1.2% on 2022–23 Original)

Analysis of Financial and Staffing Provision

Programme (1)

Provision for 2023–24 is \$86.0 million (14.3%) lower than the revised estimate for 2022–23. This is mainly due to reduced cash flow requirement for the one-off assistance package to trawler vessel owners, local deckhands and fish collector owners affected by the trawl ban, which is partially offset by the increased cash flow requirement in the administration of the Sustainable Agricultural Development Fund and Sustainable Fisheries Development Fund.

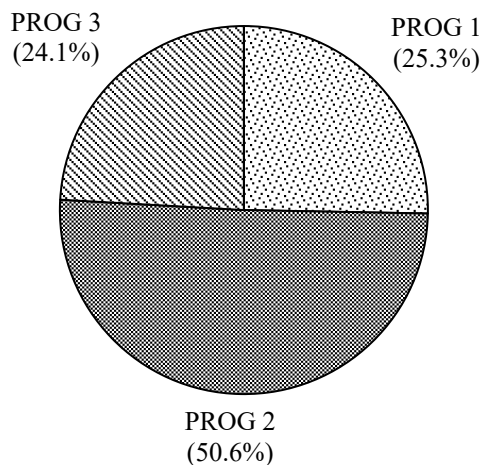
Programme (2)

Provision for 2023–24 is \$123.2 million (13.6%) higher than the revised estimate for 2022–23. This is mainly due to the increased provision for operating expenses and the increased cash flow requirement for the one-off allowance to fishermen affected by new fisheries management strategy in marine parks in 2023–24 and for procurement of minor plant, vehicles and equipment.

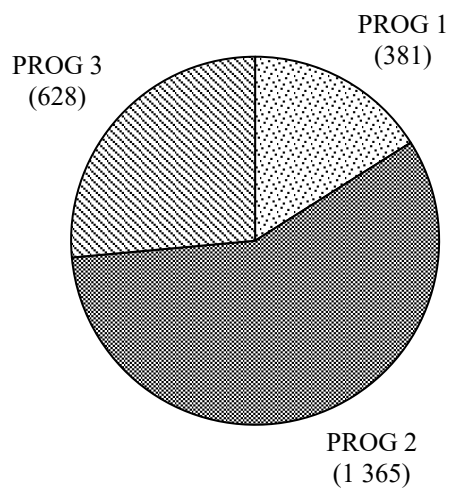
Programme (3)

Provision for 2023–24 is \$6.8 million (1.4%) higher than the revised estimate for 2022–23. This is mainly due to increased cash flow requirement for procurement of plant, vehicles and equipment.

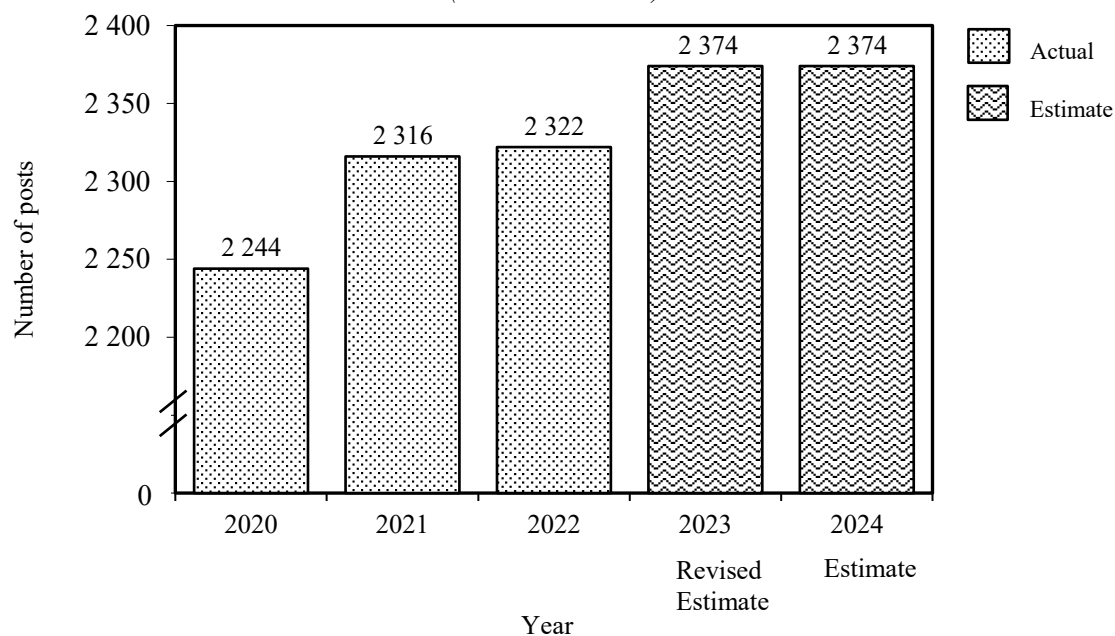
*Allocation of provision
to programmes
(2023-24)*



*Staff by programme
(as at 31 March 2024)*



*Changes in the size of the establishment
(as at 31 March)*



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Sub-head (Code)		Actual expenditure 2021–22	Approved estimate 2022–23	Revised estimate 2022–23	Estimate 2023–24
		\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
Operating Account					
Recurrent					
000	Operational expenses	1,696,719	1,764,993	1,739,913	1,842,828
	Total, Recurrent.....	1,696,719	1,764,993	1,739,913	1,842,828
Non-Recurrent					
700	General non-recurrent	110,007	230,600	188,153	100,091
	Total, Non-Recurrent.....	110,007	230,600	188,153	100,091
	Total, Operating Account	1,806,726	1,995,593	1,928,066	1,942,919
Capital Account					
Plant, Equipment and Works					
603	Plant, vehicles and equipment.....	314	367	—	30,079
609	Minor irrigation works in the New Territories (block vote).....	4,159	9,867	9,867	6,867
610	Minor recreational facilities and roadworks in country parks (block vote).....	12,820	16,170	13,918	16,233
661	Minor plant, vehicles and equipment (block vote).....	61,865	40,886	41,655	41,431
	Total, Plant, Equipment and Works.....	79,158	67,290	65,440	94,610
	Total, Capital Account.....	79,158	67,290	65,440	94,610
	Total Expenditure	1,885,884	2,062,883	1,993,506	2,037,529

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Details of Expenditure by Subhead

The estimate of the amount required in 2023–24 for the salaries and expenses of the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department is \$2,037,529,000. This represents an increase of \$44,023,000 over the revised estimate for 2022–23 and \$151,645,000 over the actual expenditure in 2021–22.

Operating Account

Recurrent

2 Provision of \$1,842,828,000 under *Subhead 000 Operational expenses* is for the salaries, allowances and other operating expenses of the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department.

3 The establishment as at 31 March 2023 will be 2 374 posts. No change in establishment is expected in 2023–24. Subject to certain conditions, the controlling officer may under delegated power create or delete non-directorate posts during 2023–24, but the notional annual mid-point salary value of all such posts must not exceed \$945,119,000.

4 An analysis of the financial provision under *Subhead 000 Operational expenses* is as follows:

	2021–22 (Actual) (\$'000)	2022–23 (Original) (\$'000)	2022–23 (Revised) (\$'000)	2023–24 (Estimate) (\$'000)
Personal Emoluments				
- Salaries	857,691	927,632	886,100	953,854
- Allowances	23,110	21,049	21,178	21,413
- Job-related allowances.....	8,978	11,394	9,591	10,882
Personnel Related Expenses				
- Mandatory Provident Fund contribution	4,744	7,937	4,458	6,637
- Civil Service Provident Fund contribution	68,801	80,106	77,389	89,382
Departmental Expenses				
- General departmental expenses	721,980	704,366	728,688	749,551
Other Charges				
- Minor conservation projects and studies	4,976	6,270	6,270	6,270
Subventions				
- Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Hong Kong).....	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500
- Network of Aquaculture Centres in Asia and the Pacific	79	80	80	80
- Rehabilitation of wild animals	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
- Conservation and management of Ramsar site	759	759	759	759
- Animal welfare organisations.....	1,475	1,500	1,500	1,500
- Biodiversity Education	1,626	1,400	1,400	—
	1,696,719	1,764,993	1,739,913	1,842,828

Capital Account

Plant, Equipment and Works

5 Provision of \$6,867,000 under *Subhead 609 Minor irrigation works in the New Territories (block vote)* is for a programme to provide irrigation works to assist agricultural development in the New Territories up to a limit of \$10 million for each project. The provision for 2023–24 represents a decrease of \$3 million (30.4%) against the revised estimate for 2022–23. This is mainly due to decrease in expenditure requirement for the projects to be carried out in 2023–24.

6 Provision of \$16,233,000 under *Subhead 610 Minor recreational facilities and roadworks in country parks (block vote)* is for minor works such as construction of fire lookouts, shelters, water filling stations and roads and for building materials for recreational facilities such as barbecue pits, information boards, shelters and outdoor furniture, up to a limit of \$10 million for each project. The provision for 2023–24 represents an increase of \$2,315,000 (16.6%) over the revised estimate for 2022–23. This is mainly due to increase in expenditure requirement for upgrading various facilities in country parks in 2023–24.

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Commitments

Sub-head (Code)	Item (Code)	Ambit	Approved commitment	Accumulated expenditure to 31.3.2022	Revised estimated expenditure for 2022–23	Balance
			\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
<i>Operating Account</i>						
700		<i>General non-recurrent</i>				
	536	Setting up a marine sanctuary in the Sha Chau and Lung Kwu Chau area....	21,000	19,478	800	722
	801	Sustainable Agricultural Development Fund	1,000,000	110,509	15,600	873,891
	802	One-off allowance to fishermen affected by new fisheries management strategy in marine parks	125,000	101,698	7,514	15,788
	808	Sustainable Fisheries Development Fund	1,000,000	132,188	15,800	852,012
	852	One-off assistance package to trawler vessel owners, local deckhands and fish collector owners affected by the trawl ban and other related measures	1,726,800	1,276,124	148,439	302,237
			<u>3,872,800</u>	<u>1,639,997</u>	<u>188,153</u>	<u>2,044,650</u>
<i>Capital Account</i>						
603		<i>Plant, vehicles and equipment</i>				
	806	Establishment of deep sea cages at new fish culture zonesΨ	74,000Ψ	—	—	74,000
	810	Replacement of Biosafety Level 3 LaboratoryΨ	27,000Ψ	—	—	27,000
	856	To replace one and procure two patrol vessels for management of marine parks/reserve and sea enforcement	45,000	314	—	44,686
			<u>146,000</u>	<u>314</u>	<u>—</u>	<u>145,686</u>
	Total		<u>4,018,800</u>	<u>1,640,311</u>	<u>188,153</u>	<u>2,190,336</u>

Ψ This is a new item, funding for which is sought in the context of the Appropriation Bill 2023.