

New requirement for temporary markets

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FROM Monday, operators of temporary markets or food centres must either be registered societies or a professional managing agents.

The new requirement, announced by Dr Yaacob Ibrahim, Minister for Environment and Water Resources, prompted a quick response:

Is the National Environment Agency (NEA) shirking its duty, asked Mr Inderjit Singh, MP for Ang Mo Kio GRC?

Would Citizens Consultative Committees (CCCs) and town councils end up bearing the responsibility?

Said Mr Singh: "I think NEA needs to bear greater responsibility rather than to pass the buck to the rest of the organisation."

Dr Yaacob replied that it should be the responsibility of the adviser and the grassroots organisations if they decide to have a temporary market.

Choices

CCCs are in charge of building temporary markets and food centres. They can choose to appoint a management committee, the relevant Town Council or a professional managing agent to build and manage the premises.

Said Dr Yaacob: "We will be responsible for permanent centres because we are responsible for them, but temporary centres are the decision made by grassroots leaders and their advisers, not by NEA."

He added that NEA will still enforce hygiene standards and ensure that there are no lapses at temporary markets and food centres.

Following the food poisoning incident at Geylang Serai temporary market, Dr Yaacob told Parliament that there will be new measures to strengthen the hygiene standards of food outlets.

To allow more frequent inspections, the current ratio of having one NEA officer inspecting 800 food outlets will be halved to

one per 400.

NEA will also impose stiffer penalties for food hygiene offences, including increasing the composition fine from \$100 to between \$200 and \$400, depending on the severity.

To encourage operators to improve the overall hygiene standards of their premises, including the cleanliness of tables, public toilets and common areas, NEA is considering grading hawker centres, coffee shops and food courts.