

Affected Choi Yuen Tsuen farmer consented to land resumption

In response to press enquiries on allegations that the Government carried out clearance work today (November 16) at Choi Yuen Tsuen before disputes were settled, a Government spokesman said the phased land resumption, which was meant to facilitate the construction of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link (XRL), started in mid-October. The Administration has gradually resumed, cleared and conducted site formation works on the structures, agricultural sites and lands vacated by villagers.

Today's land formation works were carried out with the prior written consent of the farmer concerned and did not involve any so-called 'disputes' at all.

The spokesman stressed that a total of \$250 million including land compensation and various types of ex-gratia cash allowances were offered to the Choi Yuen Tsuen villagers affected by the XRL project.

Among them, so far about \$13 million of crop ex-gratia allowances had been approved to applicants, involving some 160 cases, most of which involved small-scale planting in front of villagers' structures. The crops grown were mainly for private consumption. On average, each case was granted an allowance of more than \$80,000.

About 30 farmers, who were still actively participating in agricultural activities, were offered hundreds of thousands dollars of crops allowance, with the highest offer amounting to over \$1 million. Apart from the allowances, the farmers may sell their harvested crops before land resumption so as to make additional profit.

We believe that the established mechanism of crop ex-gratia allowance as a whole, has provided the farmers with reasonable compensation for their crops," the spokesman said.

The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) has reviewed all the crop allowance rates. AFCD was of the view that apart from edible aloe vera and organic crops, the allowance rates of other crops had already fully reflected the market values and hence no adjustments would be made. The concerned farmers were notified of the review outcome last week.

The basis of calculation for the crop compensation rates were the conditions of the crops on the assessment day, not on the clearance day. The government has recorded in details the conditions of the applicants' crops on the assessment day. Therefore, there is no need for villagers, who are dissatisfied with the compensation offer, to retain the crops on the farmland as proofs for re-assessment.

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