

**Project 17/2004 – On-Farm Organic Waste Composting Trail for Organic
Farmers: Demonstration project**

Purpose

This paper seeks Members' advice in funding the captioned application for ECF made by Hong Kong Baptist University (HKBU).

Background

2. The funding requested by this project has been revised from \$148,610.00 to \$139,100.00 to cover the staff cost of one Research Assistant, expenses on composting pile set up, food waste collection, analysis, transportation, design and printing of pamphlets and organization of seminars. The project is expected to last for 12 months.

3. The project aims to develop on-farm composting trial using waste coming from nearby sources with the dual purposes of composting production and waste recycling. A suitable site would be identified at Tai Lung Experimental Station of AFCD for establishment of a demonstration composting system. The principal investigator (PI) would also arrange training workshop in composting techniques for farmers. Both AFCD and EPD considered the proposal worthy of support, with practical values and the budget is reasonable.

4. The project was discussed at the meeting of the Research Projects Vetting Subcommittee (RPVSC) on 2.12.2004. The meeting considered that the PI should provide additional information in the following aspects for the meeting's further consideration -

- (a) The estimated number of organic farmers in Hong Kong and an estimate on how many of them would participate in the use of organic composting taking into account the estimated set-up cost and the merits of composting revealed by the proposal.
- (b) Justifications and/or workload details for engaging a postgraduate as a research assistant during the project duration.
- (c) Applicability of the proposed method in view of the relatively long

retention time (the representative mentioned some 60 days at the meeting) required for the composting process and whether there would be ways to reduce the retention time.

5. In response to the questions of the RPSVC, the PI has provided the additional information as attached in Annex 1. There are roughly 80 organic farmers in Hong Kong. Organic farming will reduce the use of fertilizer and pesticides and their subsequent contamination of food crops and surface and ground water. The estimated set-up cost of \$5,000.00 to \$6,000.00 would be affordable for the farmers. The PI estimated that initially, about 4 to 6 regional farming groups would be interested in this. The PI has also provided the workplan for the research assistant during the project period. As regards the retention time for one complete cycle, the PI explained that the piles would be put under aeration for only 30 days and then the pile will be cured for another 30 days without aeration. Three composting trials will be performed within four months time. The revised proposal incorporating the additional information is also attached in Annex 2.

Advice sought

6. Members are invited to advise whether the application for ECF should be supported with an approved grant of \$139,100.00 as detailed in paragraphs 2 to 5 above.

Secretariat, ECF Research Projects Vetting Subcommittee
January 2005