

## **GOVERNMENT COMMITTED TO SUPPORT LOCAL FARMING**

16 June 2016 – The Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority (AVA) is committed to raise local food production to achieve the vision of a high-tech, innovative and sustainable agriculture sector that makes efficient use of limited farmland and labour resources. AVA will be tendering new agriculture land on 20-year lease. 62 farms in Lim Chu Kang which are affected by redevelopment plans with tenures expiring in 2017 will also have their tenures extended till end of 2019.

### **New agriculture land to be tendered on 20-year lease**

2. All new agriculture land will be tendered based on 20-year lease instead of the previously announced blocks of 10 years<sup>1</sup>. This policy change is a result of AVA's engagement and consultation with farms. Ms Tan Poh Hong, AVA's CEO said, "In order for our agriculture sector to grow, it is important for us to understand our farms' challenges and concerns. AVA has been engaging our local farms regularly and farmers have given us feedback that investing in technology and automation requires a longer pay back period. The longer 20-year lease tenure will provide more certainty to farms and enable them to invest in intensive, highly productive technologies that operate on minimal manpower."

### **Extensions for 62 Lim Chu Kang Farms**

3. In 2014, the government had informed 62 farms in the Lim Chu Kang area that their leases will expire in June 2017, and that the land they occupy will be needed for redevelopment. They were also informed that new farm sites would be available for tender in end 2015. Due to extensive land preparation works needed at the new sites, the 1<sup>st</sup> tranche of land sales will be launched from early 2017. To cater

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<sup>1</sup> In 2014, the government announced that new agriculture land will be based on 10-year lease tenure, with possible lease extension of a further 10 years.

for sufficient transition time, the leases of the affected farms will be extended to end of 2019 instead. This extension will give farms more time to transit to the new sites.

4. Dr Koh Poh Koon, Minister of State for National Development and Trade & Industry, who emphasised the Government's commitment to transform the local agricultural sector during a visit to Seng Choon Farm, said,

*“Our agricultural sector, though small, plays an important role in Singapore’s food security. It helps to buffer against supply disruptions. We need to raise local production to achieve greater food security for our future.*

*Singapore can pave the way for urban farming solutions and become a living lab for food production technologies. We should take a leaf from our water story, where we turned our limitations into opportunities by developing technologies in water recycling and desalination.*

*Seng Choon is one such farm that has stepped up to the challenge. When it moved to its current site in 2010, it took the opportunity to transform and introduce innovation and technology to raise its productivity. They did not stop there but continued to harness new farming innovations over the years. Farms which bid successfully for new sites can learn from Seng Choon and leverage on new technology and innovation.*

*The government is committed to work with farms to achieve the vision of a high-tech, innovative and sustainable agriculture sector - making efficient use of limited farmland and labour. We will continue to support farmers’ efforts through technology transfer, sharing of expertise, R&D collaboration and co-funding new technologies.”*

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