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THE FEDERATION OF MERCHANTS'
ASSOCIATIONS, SINGAPORE

MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

EVALUATION BODY RECOMMENDS HAWKER CULTURE IN SINGAPORE FOR INSCRIPTION ON UNESCO REPRESENTATIVE LIST OF THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF HUMANITY

Singapore, 17 November 2020 – On 16 November, the 12-member Evaluation Body appointed by the Intergovernmental Committee (IGC) released a recommendation for Hawker Culture in Singapore to be inscribed on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. The Evaluation Body's recommendation will guide the discussion of Singapore's bid at the 15th session of the IGC to be held online from 14 to 19 December 2020. The IGC will assess the recommendation of the Evaluation Body and make the final decision as to whether Hawker Culture in Singapore will be inscribed to the Representative List.

2 The Evaluation Body¹ evaluates the nominations submitted by State Parties to the Lists, including the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, and makes recommendations to the IGC for its final decision. Overall, the Evaluation Body recommended Hawker Culture in Singapore to be inscribed, having assessed it to fulfil all of the five criteria² used by the IGC. In addition, the Evaluation Body also commended Singapore for devising creative ways to encourage the active participation of the communities concerned in the nomination process, from the very outset. It also commended Singapore for preparing a nomination file related to an intangible cultural heritage element that is thriving in a highly urbanised and culturally diverse environment, and for developing safeguarding measures that effectively foster dialogue, creativity and sustainability. Singapore's nomination was also cited by the Evaluation Body as a positive example for its celebration of intangible cultural heritage, diversity, dialogue and sustainability (Please see **Annex A** for the complete extract of the text of the Evaluation Body's recommendation on Hawker Culture in Singapore).

3 Ms Chang Hwee Nee, Chief Executive Officer of the National Heritage Board (NHB), said, "The Evaluation Body's recommendation is an affirmation by international experts of Singapore's bid. Comprising a unique combination of food, space and community, Hawker Culture has evolved into a microcosm of our multicultural society, and is an integral part of our living heritage. It provides a sense of identity and continuity in Singapore, over

¹ The Evaluation Body is appointed by the IGC and comprises six experts in the various fields of ICH from State Parties and 6 representatives from Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) accredited by UNESCO.

² The five criteria are a) How it meets UNESCO's definition of intangible cultural heritage; b) How the potential inscription of Hawker Culture in Singapore increases visibility, awareness and dialogue of intangible cultural heritage; c) How existing and future safeguarding measures ensure the promotion and continued practice and transmission of the element; d) How the nomination effort has involved the widespread participation of the community; and e) The inclusion of this element in our intangible cultural heritage inventory.



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generations and through urbanisation and development. We have seen overwhelming support from Singaporeans since the announcement of Singapore's nomination was made in August 2018. We hope the successful inscription of Hawker Culture would further raise awareness and appreciation among Singaporeans of the importance of intangible cultural heritage in our daily lives, and continue to promote dialogues among our communities. With the recommendation, we hope to hear good news during the IGC meeting in December."

4 Mr Tan Meng Dui, Chief Executive Officer of the National Environment Agency (NEA), said, "Hawker Culture is synonymous to Singapore, and a unifying culture that binds our people and society. The effort to inscribe Hawker Culture in Singapore on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity shows our commitment as a nation to safeguard Hawker Culture for generations to come. While Hawker Culture is as old as Singapore, its development has evolved over the years, with emphasis on building conducive hawker centres in the early years, to creating vibrant community dining rooms and sustaining the hawker trade for the future. Hawkers are central to our Hawker Culture. NEA remains steadfast in our efforts to attract new entrants to the trade, and to partner hawkers and relevant stakeholders to sustain and strengthen hawker culture. A successful inscription in December will be the finest form of recognition to all our hawkers, past and present."

5 Mr Yeo Hiang Meng, President of The Federation of Merchants' Associations, Singapore (FMAS) said, "It is heartening to hear that the Evaluation Body has recognised Singapore's efforts in nominating Hawker Culture for inscription. The Federation Merchants' Association, Singapore has been actively engaging our hawkers through our Hawkers' Associations or representatives throughout the nomination journey. Our hawker members are very proud of our nomination, and have stepped forward to show their support in various ways. We hope that the IGC's decision in December will be a favourable one, which will bring about more awareness of our Hawker Culture internationally, and acknowledgement for our hawker members' dedication towards their craft."

6 For more information, please refer to:

- **Annex A:** Extract of the Evaluation Body's Recommendation on Hawker Culture in Singapore
- **Annex B:** Timeline of Singapore's UNESCO Extract of the Evaluation Body's Recommendation on Hawker Culture in Singapore Inscription Journey for Hawker Culture
- **Annex C:** About the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity
- **Annex D:** Evaluation Criteria and how Singapore's Nomination Form Addresses the Criteria
- **Webpage (www.oursqheritage.sg/hawker-culture-unesco-submission):** Summary of the nomination documents
- **Webpage (www.oursqheritage.sg/hawker-culture-public-support):** Information on public contributions and community support
- **Annex E:** Factsheet on Initiatives to Sustain the Hawker Trade

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About the National Heritage Board

The National Heritage Board (NHB) was formed on 1 August 1993. As the custodian of Singapore's heritage, NHB is responsible for telling the Singapore story, sharing the Singaporean experience and imparting our Singapore spirit.

NHB's mission is to preserve and celebrate the shared heritage of our diverse communities, for the purpose of education, nation-building and cultural understanding. It manages the national museums and heritage institutions, and sets policies relating to heritage sites, monuments and the national collection. Through the national collection, NHB curates heritage programmes and presents exhibitions to connect the past, present and future generations of Singaporeans. NHB is a statutory board under the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth. Please visit www.nhb.gov.sg for more information.

About the National Environment Agency

Formed on 1 July 2002, the National Environment Agency (NEA) is the leading public organisation responsible for ensuring a clean and green environment, and the sustainable development of Singapore. Its key roles are to protect Singapore's resources from pollution, maintain a high level of public health and provide timely meteorological information. NEA also develops and spearheads environmental initiatives and programmes through its partnership with the People, Public and Private sectors. It is committed to motivating every individual to care for the environment as a way of life, in order to sustain a quality living environment for present and future generations.

About The Federation Of Merchants' Associations, Singapore

Registered as an association in 1989, the Federation of Merchants' Associations, Singapore (FMAS) is a non-profit organisation formed to represent interest of merchants operating in the Housing and Development Board (HDB) neighbourhood and town centres, as well as stallholders selling in the National Environmental Agency (NEA) hawker centres and markets. Its vision is to be the champion for the heartland business community, and the bridge between the government and heartland retailers and hawkers.



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ANNEX A

Extract of the Evaluation Body's Recommendation on Hawker Culture in Singapore

Examination of nominations for inscription on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (<https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/LHE-20-15.COM-8.b-EN.docx>)

DRAFT DECISION 15.COM 8.b.6

The Committee

1. Takes note that Singapore has nominated **Hawker culture in Singapore: community dining and culinary practices in a multicultural urban context** (no. 01568) for inscription on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity:

Hawker culture in Singapore: community dining and culinary practices in a multicultural urban context is present throughout Singapore. Hawkers prepare a variety of food ('hawker food') for people who dine and mingle at hawker centres. These centres serve as 'community dining rooms' where people from diverse backgrounds gather and share the experience of dining over breakfast, lunch and dinner. Activities such as chess-playing, busking and art-jamming also take place. Evolved from street food culture, hawker centres have become markers of Singapore as a multicultural city-state, comprising Chinese, Malay, Indian and other cultures. Hawkers take inspiration from the confluence of these cultures, adapting dishes to local tastes and contexts. Today, hawker centres across Singapore continue serving the needs of diverse communities in residential, recreational and work districts. Some of the oldest hawkers started their practice in the 1960s. Many specialize in a particular dish, refined over many years, and transmit their recipes, knowledge and skills to younger family members or apprentices. Community organizations, non-governmental organizations and educational institutions play a significant role in promoting and sustaining hawker culture through training programmes, events and documentation projects. As a social space that embraces people from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, hawker centres play a crucial role in enhancing community interactions and strengthening the social fabric.

2. Considers that, from the information included in the file, the nomination satisfies the following criteria for inscription on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity:

R.1: An integral way of life in Singapore, hawker culture provides a sense of identity and continuity for people across the generations and in a context of

urbanization and development. The bearers and practitioners of hawker culture include hawkers, associated groups and people in Singapore who dine and mingle at hawker centers. The knowledge and skills of culinary practices associated with hawker culture are transmitted both non-formally and formally. The multicultural nature of hawker culture respects the cultural traits and norms of different communities and promotes the awareness and appreciation of different religious and cultural practices. It plays a crucial social role in enhancing community interactions, fostering an inclusive society irrespective of the diverse social, religious and ethnic backgrounds of its people.

- R.2: The inscription of the element will inspire local community groups and individuals to find out more about the different types of intangible cultural heritage practices surrounding their daily lives, and to initiate projects and activities that can contribute to their safeguarding. At the international level, the inscription of the element will reinforce the visibility and prevalence of intangible cultural heritage in urban contexts. In a world of ever-expanding urban migration and globalization, it could serve as an example of how intangible cultural heritage can thrive in a highly urbanized environment, as well as contributing to multiple targets of the sustainable development goals (for instance in relation to urban planning, enhancing social cohesion, fostering food security and sustaining livelihoods).
- R.3: Nowadays, the culture of hawker centers exhibits significant vitality. Various stakeholders are actively involved in promoting and enhancing the element and the future safeguarding measures were proposed with the active involvement of the communities, groups and individuals concerned. These measures focus on the following axes: transmission and education, research and documentation, policies and administrative measures, awareness-raising and communication and international engagement. The State Party and other actors concerned are committed to supporting actions related to these areas of safeguarding. The excessive and uncontrolled marketing of the element has been identified as a potential unintended consequence of the inscription. In order to avoid this, it is proposed that various organizations monitor the hawker centers constantly.
- R.4: The communities, groups and individuals concerned were involved in every stage of the nomination process, with an equitable gender balance. The Nomination Committee, which included hawkers' and non-governmental organizations' representatives, consulted various stakeholders. The nomination was shared with the public and has generated awareness among various communities since August 2018. On 19 March 2019, over 850,000 people – both men and women from diverse socio-cultural backgrounds, including overseas Singaporeans – indicated their support and consent

through various means: the website, a travel exhibition, letters of consent, and video consent.

R.5: The element was included in the Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Singapore in 2018. The inventory is updated once a year by the National Heritage Board (NHB) and is developed with the involvement of community groups, researchers and the public. Focus group discussions were held to seek views on elements that could be included in the inventory. These were followed by further research and verification by the NHB, with a final review by the Heritage Advisory Panel of experts, which advises on tangible and intangible cultural heritage.

3. Decides to inscribe **Hawker culture in Singapore, community dining and culinary practices in a multicultural urban context** on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity;
4. Commends the State Party for its first inscription;
5. Further commends the State Party for devising creative ways to encourage the active participation of the communities concerned in the nomination process, from the very outset;
6. Also commends the State Party for preparing a nomination file related to an element of intangible cultural heritage that is thriving in a highly urbanized and culturally diverse environment and for developing safeguarding measures that effectively foster dialogue, creativity and sustainability.

Report of the Evaluation Body on its work in 2020 (<https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/LHE-20-15.COM-8-EN.docx>)

Good examples. The Evaluation Body is pleased to recommend the following nominations from this cycle as good examples:

i. **Representative List – Overall files**

‘Hawker culture in Singapore, community dining and culinary practices in a multicultural urban context’, nominated by Singapore, is a well-prepared nomination file which reflects the spirit of the Convention in many ways in terms of its celebration of intangible cultural heritage, diversity, dialogue and sustainability. The file presents exemplary working methods regarding participation, inclusion and the involvement of a wide variety of actors, as well as safeguarding approaches that foster a viable approach to the practice of intangible cultural heritage.

ANNEX B

Factsheet on the Inscription Journey

1 Timeline of Singapore's UNESCO inscription journey for Hawker Culture

No.	Date	Event
1	February 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Singapore ratified the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, as part of the country's ongoing efforts to safeguard, promote and commemorate Singapore's intangible cultural heritage under Our SG Heritage Plan, the first master plan for the future of Singapore's heritage and museum sector. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Ratifying, or consenting to be bound by, the convention signals a country's commitment to safeguarding and promoting its intangible cultural heritage. Singapore is one of the 180 countries which are signatories to the convention. – As a signatory to the convention, Singapore will be allowed to submit nomination(s) to inscribe intangible cultural heritage elements onto the UNESCO Representative List.
2	April 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Heritage Board co-created an intangible cultural heritage inventory with Singaporeans. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Singapore's intangible cultural heritage inventory exists as a repository to showcase the diverse elements of intangible cultural heritage that are present and practised in multicultural Singapore, and includes the contributions of many Singaporeans. – The establishment of such an inventory is the first step towards, and a criterion for the nomination of an intangible cultural heritage element for inscription on the UNESCO Representative List.
3	August 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Singapore announced its intention to nominate Hawker Culture in Singapore for the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hawker Culture was identified as the element to be nominated for the UNESCO Representative List, during focus group discussions conducted from April to July 2018. More than 140 participants discussed aspects of our diverse intangible cultural heritage and possible elements to be nominated for inscription on the UNESCO Representative List. Hawker Culture was

		<p>consistently highlighted as an intangible cultural heritage that best represents Singapore's multicultural heritage, with hawker centres viewed as important community spaces.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The successful nomination of an element from Singapore will allow us to profile and share the rich and multicultural aspects of our heritage with the international community. – The successful listing of an element on UNESCO's Representative List by a country does not imply that this element belongs exclusively to, originates from, or exists only in the submitting country. 						
4	March 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Singapore submitted the nomination documents to UNESCO for evaluation and decision on the inscription. 						
5	March 2019 to December 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation by UNESCO <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Following the submission of the nomination documents to UNESCO, the UNESCO Secretariat will process the documents and invite the submitting state to submit any missing information by September 2019. – Thereafter, the documents will be assessed by the 12-member Evaluation Body, a panel of experts appointed by the 24-member Intergovernmental Committee (IGC) for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. The Evaluation Body will put forth their recommendations to the IGC, which comprises representatives from different countries which are State Parties to the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. 						
	16 November 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The Evaluation Body has recommended Hawker Culture in Singapore for inscription. 						
	14 – 19 December 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The 15th session of the IGC will be held online from 14 to 19 December 2020. Guided by the recommendations of the Evaluation Body, the IGC will decide on the nomination of Hawker Culture in Singapore to be inscribed on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. <p>At the 15th session of the IGC, Hawker Culture in Singapore may either be</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: center;">Successfully inscribed</td> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: center;">Unsuccessfully inscribed and be:</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;"> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: center;">Referred</td> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: center;">Not inscribed</td> </tr> </table> </td> </tr> </table>	Successfully inscribed	Unsuccessfully inscribed and be:		<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: center;">Referred</td> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: center;">Not inscribed</td> </tr> </table>	Referred	Not inscribed
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Referred	Not inscribed							

2 Possible outcomes at the 15th session of the Intergovernmental Committee

Possible outcomes at the IGC arising from Evaluation Body's recommendation

- c. The Evaluation Body's recommendation will guide the decision taken by the 15th session of the IGC towards Singapore's bid. This session will be held online from 14 to 19 December 2020.
- d. While this is the case, the final decision lies with the IGC.
- e. The following are plausible scenarios at the IGC arising from Evaluation Body's recommendation:

Evaluation Body's recommendation	IGC's possible decision	Remarks
Recommended	Successful inscription	<p>If Hawker Culture in Singapore is recommended for inscription, it stands a good chance for inscription at the 15th session of the IGC. However, the final decision still lies with the IGC.</p> <p>In the scenario of a successful inscription, Singapore is committed to the safeguarding and transmission of Hawker Culture in Singapore. Singapore is also expected to submit a report to UNESCO every 6 years on the progress of the nomination, in particular the safeguarding efforts.</p>
	Referral of nomination	<p>If Hawker Culture in Singapore is recommended for inscription by the Evaluation Body, the IGC may still decide to refer the nomination for additional information.</p> <p>Singapore will need to review and edit the dossier, to be resubmitted in the following cycles, with 2021 the very earliest.</p>



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ANNEX C

About UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity

The UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity comprises the diverse cultural practices and expressions of humanity, and seeks to raise awareness of the importance of such practices and expressions, encourage dialogue that respects cultural diversity, as well as give due recognition to the practices and expressions of communities worldwide.

The successful listing of an element on UNESCO's Representative List by a country does not imply that this element belongs to, originates from, or exists only in the submitting country. Since the Representative List was developed in 2008, a total of 463 intangible cultural heritage elements have been inscribed as of 2019.

Some of the intangible cultural heritage elements on UNESCO's Representative List include Mak Yong theatre (Malaysia, 2008), Gastronomic Meal of the French (France, 2010), Indonesian Angklung (Indonesia, 2010), Chinese Shadow Puppetry (China, 2011), Kimjang, or the making and sharing of Kimchi (South Korea, 2013), Washoku (Japan, 2013), Bagpipe Culture (Slovakia, 2015) and Yoga (India, 2016).



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ANNEX D

Evaluation Criteria and how Singapore's Nomination Form Addresses the Criteria

UNESCO's evaluation of the nomination of Hawker Culture in Singapore will be based on five criteria:

1. How it meets UNESCO's definition of intangible cultural heritage;
2. How the potential inscription of Hawker Culture in Singapore increases visibility, awareness and dialogue of intangible cultural heritage;
3. How existing and future safeguarding measures ensure the promotion and continued practice and transmission of the element;
4. How the nomination effort has involved the widespread participation of the community; and
5. The inclusion of this element in our intangible cultural heritage inventory.

Singapore's nomination form sets out the points to demonstrate how Hawker Culture in Singapore fulfils the abovementioned five criteria:

A) How Hawker Culture in Singapore Meets UNESCO's Definition of Intangible Cultural Heritage

Hawker Culture is an important element of Singapore's intangible cultural heritage (also known as "living heritage"), as defined in the 2003 UNESCO Convention. The Convention defines intangible cultural heritage as "the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognise as part of their cultural heritage." Hawker Culture, as it has evolved in Singapore, is a reflection of our living heritage and has been transmitted from generation to generation. It has evolved in tandem with and adapted to the socio-economic development of Singapore over the decades, from street hawkers of the past, to hawkers based in hawker centres, which have become important community spaces.

B) How the Nomination or Potential Inscription of Hawker Culture Increases Visibility, Awareness and Dialogue of Intangible Cultural Heritage

Food is a theme that is easily relatable and well-loved by Singaporeans. The announcement of Singapore's intention to inscribe Hawker Culture in Singapore on UNESCO's Representative List generated considerable discussion and awareness of the importance of Hawker Culture among Singaporeans. The successful inscription of Hawker Culture in Singapore would further contribute to raising awareness and appreciation among Singaporeans of the presence, pertinence and role of intangible cultural heritage in our daily lives.

At the international level, the successful inscription of Hawker Culture would be a meaningful acknowledgement, and reinforce the visibility and prevalence of intangible cultural heritage in urban contexts. In a world of ever-expanding globalisation and urbanisation, Hawker Culture in Singapore is a concrete and living illustration of how an intangible cultural heritage



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has evolved and can continue to thrive in a culturally diverse, rapidly developing and highly urbanised environment.

C) How the Existing and Future Safeguarding Measures Ensure the Promotion and Transmission of the Practice

The future viability of Hawker Culture in Singapore is ensured by a diverse group of stakeholders including hawkers, training institutions, schools, community organisations, academia, government, NGOs and individuals, amongst others, through the transmission of culinary practices, as well as research, documentation and promotion of various aspects of Hawker Culture. Some examples of safeguarding measures that have been elaborated in the nomination documents are:

- Hawkers who pass on culinary practices through on-the-job training to younger family members or apprentices who learn to prepare food and manage the stalls. Some hawkers have led apprenticeship programmes, where experienced hawkers are paired with aspiring hawkers to transmit recipes, culinary practices and offer mentorship on the management of a hawker stall.
- Culinary and training institutions which organise field trips at hawker centres for students, allowing them to learn about the dynamics of operating a hawker stall and fostering their interest to join the practice; as well as schools and educational institutions which help promote awareness and understanding of Hawker Culture in Singapore to students through projects and outreach initiatives.
- Local food advocates, community organisations and academia who contribute to documenting Hawker Culture in Singapore, including producing publications and video documentaries detailing culinary practices of Hawker Culture.
- FMAS, hawkers' associations and representatives who safeguard interests of the hawkers and monitor issues at the hawker centres. For instance, FMAS organises meetings and networking sessions with hawkers to support the planning of safeguarding measures. It has also partnered NEA and NHB to conduct focus group discussions involving hawkers, experts and stakeholders, to share information about the nomination and gather feedback on safeguarding measures.

D) How the Nomination Effort Has Involved the Widespread Participation of the Community

For the nomination of Hawker Culture in Singapore to be successful, strong support from the community is crucial. As of 27 March 2019, when the nomination documents were submitted, more than 850,000 pledges of support and over 31,000 messages have been registered across various platforms including a website (Oursgheritage.sg), a travelling exhibition and mobile pledging stations – all in support of Hawker Culture in Singapore to be inscribed on the UNESCO Representative List. A social media movement, #OurHawkerCulture, invited Singaporeans to express support for the nomination by submitting personal stories and photographs of their experiences of Hawker Culture in



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Singapore through Facebook and Instagram (@SGHawkerCulture), generating over 810,000 “likes” and “comments”.

Over 200 letters of support for the nomination have also been received from hawkers’ associations, schools, community groups, NGOs and private organisations across different sectors ranging from food and hospitality, to education.

Corporations, organisations, community groups and individuals have stepped forward to work on projects on Hawker Culture to raise greater awareness of its importance in Singapore, and contribute towards its safeguarding. Examples include Eat Shop Play, a digital platform to share information and stories of hawker stalls and centres island wide.

Youths have also enthusiastically rallied to demonstrate their love for Hawker Culture through artistic expressions – writing poems and letters, drawing commonly observed scenes at hawker centres, and even filming a short video which shares the importance of Hawker Culture to Singapore.

E) Inclusion of Hawker Culture, as Practised in Singapore, in an Intangible Cultural Heritage Inventory

NHB launched an intangible cultural heritage inventory in 2018 comprising elements of our intangible cultural heritage currently practised in multicultural Singapore. These include Hawker Culture, as well as various forms of performing arts, traditional crafts, social practices and festivals, as practices in Singapore. As of November 2020, there are 88 elements on the intangible cultural heritage inventory.



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ANNEX E

Factsheet on Initiatives to Sustain the Hawker Trade

Hawkers are key custodians of the Hawker Culture in Singapore. With the median age of hawkers at 59 years old, it is important to grow the pool of hawkers and sustain the hawker trade. Concerted efforts by a diverse group of stakeholders from both the public and private sectors as well as Singaporeans who support and patronise our hawkers with their families and friends are needed to ensure the future viability of the hawker trade.

Since 2013, NEA has been providing training opportunities and pathways for aspiring hawkers. Barriers to entry are low, and aspiring hawkers can secure a stall at monthly tender exercises, with no minimum bid. A total of 7 new hawker centres have also been built and come into operation since 2015 to meet public needs. At the new hawker centres operated by the Socially-Conscious Enterprises, incubation programmes are typically put in place to facilitate and support new entrants. Collectively, these have helped to generate awareness and promote the hawker trade as a profession. Results have been promising, and the median age of new entrants since 2013 is 46 years old — significantly lower than the national median.

With the building of more new hawker centres, and the various incubation programmes, the median age of hawkers is expected to decrease further. NEA will continue to work with the hawker community and relevant stakeholders to look at ways to attract and support new entrants to the trade. Together, we will sustain the hawker trade, and keep Singapore's Hawker Culture flourishing for future generations.

NEA's Incubation Stall Programme

The Incubation Stall Programme by NEA provides aspiring hawkers opportunities to take up incubation stalls to start their hawker businesses. Since the launch of the programme on 23 February 2018, more than 130 persons have applied, of which 29 have been successful in their application. Currently, 3 incubation stallholders have moved on to become full-fledged hawkers and another 11 are currently operating their incubation stalls. The rest had decided that they were either not suitable for the hawker trade or withdrew due to personal reasons.

Successful applicants of the programme are offered incubation stalls pre-fitted with basic equipment to lower their upfront capital investments. They will also enjoy rental rebates, at 50 per cent for the first nine months of operation and 25 per cent for the next six months. Young enterprising hawkers under the programme sell a good mix of traditional hawker fare such as wanton noodles and thunder tea rice as well as interesting and trendy options such as gourmet burgers with a twist and unique bakes.

Hawkers' Development Programme

NEA and SkillsFuture Singapore (SSG) have jointly developed the Hawkers' Development Programme, to equip existing and aspiring hawkers with the relevant skills and



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competencies to run their hawker businesses. Launched in January 2020, the programme complements existing efforts to support the hawker trade and is a key recommendation from a multi-stakeholders Workgroup formed to make recommendations on sustaining the hawker trade.

The programme comprises three stages - training, apprenticeship, and running an incubation stall. Currently, close to 150 participants have completed the training stage, of which, 50 have moved on to the apprenticeship stage. Among them, 35 participants who have completed the apprenticeship stage of the programme are progressively moving on to the final stage of the programme, the incubation stage.

Incubation Programmes at Hawker Centres Operated by the Socially-Conscious Enterprises

At the new hawker centres operated by the Socially-Conscious Enterprises, such as Timbre+Hawkers and Fei Siong Social Enterprise, incubation programmes have also been put in place to facilitate and encourage new entrants to the hawker trade. The programmes offered have different plans and schemes to meet the different risk appetites and needs of aspiring hawkers.

To date, 54 aspiring hawkers have participated in these programmes and close to half of them are still in the trade as full-fledged hawkers.