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1,000 unlicensed stalls in NT

WHILE the hawker population in urban areas totals 30,000, the New Territories has only about 4,000 hawkers — a quarter of whom are unlicensed.

And unlike the urban areas, which are fully developed, the New Territories has the advantage of better town planning and room for expansion.

Staff officer for hawkers in the Regional Services Department (RSD), Mr Ma Kwong-choi, says before an area is developed provision is made to build a market which will also accommodate licensed hawkers.

In addition, there is not the population, or money, to attract so many hawkers.

Mr Ma said there were some black spots in the new towns but each area had only 10

to 20 unlicensed hawkers.

Raids are frequent on the worst places such as Kwai Chung, Tsing Yi and Tuen Mun.

Mr Ma said it was the RSD's policy not to licence any more hawkers, apart from newspaper hawkers.

With more stringent conditions imposed on hawker licensing, the RSD hopes the hawker population in the New Territories will gradually decline.

For example, the licence may only be transferred to the spouse of a licensee.

The RSD is also committed to building new markets to accommodate licensed hawkers. Mr Ma said they had planned to build 14 more new markets in the next five years.