

EPD's response to media enquiries

â€‹In response to media enquiries on how the regulation of disposable plastic tableware is applied to the provision of food in supermarkets and food courts, the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) today (April 25) gave the following response:

Some business premises mainly focusing on retail (e.g. supermarkets, department stores) also sell pre-packaged food for immediate consumption (e.g. boxed sushi, sandwiches). The relevant products are placed on the shelves for customers to choose, and also for facilitating customers to take them away from the premises. This business model is considered as takeaway and therefore plastic cups and plastic food containers can be used. Where the customers consume the product is not relevant.

The mode of operation of food courts in shopping malls/large department stores is different. Food stalls in food courts usually prepare and serve food (e.g. stir-fried noodles) on the spot according to the orders placed by customers, and there are dining areas in food courts for customers to dine in. This business model is basically the same as that of regular restaurants, hence food stalls in food courts are required to comply with the regulatory requirements on tableware for dine-in service. Similar to other restaurants, if customers purchase food for takeaway, this will not be regarded as providing dine-in service and plastic cups and plastic food containers can be used.

If food courts offer pre-packaged food for immediate consumption (e.g. boxed sushi, sandwiches) on shelves or through vending machines that allow customers to make purchases and facilitate them to take the products away from the premises, based on the above principle, this is also considered as takeaway, and therefore the products can be packaged in plastic food containers.

If the cooked food section of a supermarket serves food (e.g. stir-fried noodles) prepared on the spot according to the orders placed by customers, and there are dining areas for customers to dine-in, this situation is similar to the mode of operation of a food court, and no different from that of a regular restaurant. Under this circumstance, it has to comply with the regulatory requirements on tableware for dine-in service. The above is consistent with the explanation on the situation of supermarkets given by the EPD at its earlier training seminar for the retail and service sector.

As far as customers are concerned, the purchase and use of certain disposable plastic products will not violate the law under any circumstances.