

“Plastic-Free Takeaway, Use Reusable Tableware” pilot programme saves over 1 million sets of disposable tableware

The Environmental Campaign Committee (ECC) and the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) collaborated with the Hong Kong Catering Industry Association to jointly hold a publicity and education campaign entitled "Plastic-Free Takeaway, Use Reusable Tableware" to encourage members of the public to go plastic-and-disposable-free when they order takeaways. The first phase of the campaign – a two-month pilot programme at three major fast food chains in Hong Kong – concluded successfully on January 15. During the pilot programme, members of the public together reduced waste and saved more than 1.2 million sets of disposable tableware, and redeemed over 100,000 gifts (sets of reusable stainless steel cutlery or a complimentary hot drink).

The EPD spokesman said, "The campaign has enhanced the public's understanding of the importance of going plastic-free, and promoted behavioural changes to foster a green lifestyle by providing suitable incentives. During the pilot programme, the ECC and the EPD proactively promoted the campaign via social media, radio and newspapers. Given the extensive network of the three major fast food chains across the territory, the programme successfully aroused public awareness and support for going plastic-free, and had an impact on publicity and public education. This has helped promote the plastic-free practice in society and enabled the plastic-and-disposable-free culture to take root at the community level."

Under the pilot programme, members of the public could receive a sticker for each takeaway order made at the participating fast food chains without obtaining any disposable tableware. After collecting six stickers, they could redeem reusable stainless steel cutlery sponsored by the ECC for free, or enjoy a complimentary hot drink sponsored by the participating fast food chains, so as to encourage members of the public to cultivate the good habit of bringing their own tableware and reducing the use of disposable plastic tableware. During the pilot programme period, the three major fast food chains distributed over 1.2 million stickers to take-away customers. Members of the public also redeemed about 86,000 sets of reusable stainless steel cutlery and some 22,000 cups of complimentary hot drinks.

The ECC and the EPD are working on the next phase of the publicity and education campaign with a view to further promoting the plastic-and-disposable-free message to members of the public. Views from various stakeholders to enhance the campaign are welcome.

In addition, starting this month, the Government has taken the initiative in banning plastic straws and polyfoam food containers in designated premises and canteens mainly serving government staff. Bureaux and departments, when inviting tenders for new or renewing existing contracts, will stipulate the requirement for restaurant operators in suitable

government venues to avoid using disposable plastic tableware wherever practicable, including not providing disposable tableware for dine-in customers, not providing disposable tableware by default or in sets for take-away customers, and using tableware made of greener materials (e.g. plant fibre) to replace disposable plastic tableware. The EPD will commence a consultancy study in the first quarter of 2019 to consider possible control measures for disposable plastic tableware in Hong Kong in the long run. The study will in tandem take into account the experience gained from promoting using less disposable plastic tableware in government premises and the food and beverage sector.