New zero-waste law to compel big firms to take greater action

It will put in place approach mandating key steps required for achieving source sustainability and enable recycling

BY AUDREY TAN, Environment Correspondent

The fight against Singapore’s mountain of trash will soon pack a bigger punch, with new waste reduction measures that will make it mandatory for some large producers of waste to reduce and reuse as much as possible.

The Government today introduced a new Resource Sustainability Bill in Parliament to make it mandatory for large firms to keep waste to a minimum, and to do so in a way that realises the maximum amount of value from their waste.

By 2035, Singaporeans and businesses will be required to reduce and reuse as much as possible, with some waste streams expected to be reduced by at least 30 per cent. Some waste streams are expected to be reduced by up to 60 per cent.

The new Act gives regulatory teeth to compulsory measures, more schemes to re-use and recycle, and the setting of targets – with the the annual waste generation rate per household expected to hit a “green ceiling” of 600 kg by 2035.

Efforts to reduce the waste streams – food, packaging and electronic waste – will account for online retailing, as well as those that ship their goods online.

The underlying issue is underpricing of wasteful practices, she said.

She suggested that Singaporeans should be encouraged to think more about the cost of convenience by, for example, mandating that household purchases and use government-certified bags for rubbish disposal.

Mr Louis Ng (Nee Soon GRC) called for an overhaul – to ensure that the fundamental issue that requires urgent action is the minimum amount of trash that Singaporeans produce and how they dispose of it.

From 2022, new commercial establishments where large amounts of food waste are expected to be generated must allocate space for on-site food waste treatment. On-site treatment must be implemented from 2024.

By 2025, some large producers of waste from overseas are expected to be mandated to reduce their waste imports, provide avenues for recycling (for example, e-waste) and improve their waste-to-recyclers.

Food waste will be tackled with new measures, including new regulations that will make it mandatory for the owners and operators of commercial premises where large amounts of food waste are generated to install food waste disposal facilities.

If they fail to comply, they could be hit with a “green ceiling”, and why recycling will amplify the efforts towards a circular economy to mitigate against climate change.

Recalibrating consumers’ expectations to ensure that the charismatic consumer is not a dime a dozen. To ensure that the “throw-away culture” that is so natural to the consumer cannot become an excuse for wastefulness.

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The reality is that tackling the root of the issue means reducing all emissions in the economy.

Today, we overlook the ecological footprint and intensely see posters of gorgeous food heading towards us.

It is, like some fat around the waist, not sufficient. As the father of two young children who could fiddle to see the turn of the next century, I feel we need to ask ourselves the measures in the Bill is necessary, but ultimately, not sufficient.

Are we simply a country that is undertaking climate action? Is it really accelerating our carbon footprint?

Yes, as small country, our national will be affected, and small islands will be affected. We need to take up a带头作用 in tackling the root of the world’s most significant waste streams.

THE STRATES TIMES | THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 5, 2019

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**Source:** MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND WATER RESOURCES

**FOOD WASTE**

- 60,000 tonnes annually
- 6% is recycled
- 6% is recycled by households
- 6% is recycled

**PACKAGING WASTE**

- About 530,000 tonnes in 2018
- 4% is recycled
- 4% is recycled

**E-WASTE**

- 76,000 tonnes in 2018
- 17% is recycled

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