

Most people here concerned about food waste: Poll

They say F&B firms should give near-expiry or unsold food to needy or sell it at discount

Feng Zengkun
Environment Correspondent

Nine out of 10 people here are concerned about Singapore's food waste, a new survey has found.

The majority also want food and beverage (F&B) companies here to donate their unsold and near-expiry food that is safe to eat to the needy or sell it at a discount.

Students from the National University of Singapore's Chua Thian Poh Community Leadership Programme, working with new non-profit group Zero Waste SG, conducted the online survey from February to April this year.

It was completed by about 430 people aged between 16 and 72 with monthly household incomes ranging from less than \$3,000 to more than \$12,000.

More than nine in 10 said F&B companies here need to do more to reduce food waste. Last year, Singapore threw away 788,600 tonnes of food, of which only about 13 per cent was recycled.

The discarded food was a slight improvement over 2013's 796,000 tonnes, but still a sharp increase from the 703,200 tonnes in 2012.

The survey respondents also wanted to know more about how

brands such as NTUC FairPrice, BreadTalk, McDonald's and Cold Storage reduce their food waste.

Many said they would support a company that did its part to cut down on waste. About eight in 10 would help publicise such efforts, while seven in 10 would buy more of the company's food or visit its outlets more often if it did this.

Zero Waste SG executive director Eugene Tay said: "Food and beverage companies should be proactive in addressing consumers' interest and reduce food wastage."

BE PROACTIVE

One of the things (companies) can do immediately is to donate unsold food to charities such as Food Bank and Food from the Heart.



MR EUGENE TAY,
Zero Waste SG executive director

"One of the things they can do immediately is to donate unsold food to charities such as Food Bank and Food from the Heart."

NTUC FairPrice said that at its FairPrice Xtra outlets, when fruits and vegetables are left unsold due to blemishes, the supermarket chain cuts them into smaller pieces or trims them, then repackages and sells them at lower prices.

It also marks down the prices of seafood and chilled meats at all stores after they have been displayed for a day. It donates unsold but edible canned food to the community through Food from the Heart, and is exploring turning food waste into compost.

Supermarket chain Sheng Siong also sells fresh food with blemishes at a discount and uses food near expiry as ingredients in cooked meals for its staff, among other measures. A spokesman said that Sheng Siong has introduced more pre-packed fruits and food to prevent damage due to people touching and handling them: "For example, instead of bagging grapes, we now try to pack them in ventilated, transparent boxes."

McDonald's collects its used cooking oil and sells it to a recycling company to be made into soap and biodiesel. A spokesman said: "To minimise wastage, we adopt a 'cook in smaller quantities but cook more often' approach."

zengkun@sph.com.sg