

PRESS RELEASE

Drink Without Waste welcomes Public Consultation on Producer Responsibility Scheme for Beverage Packaging in Hong Kong

- We call for a Producer Responsibility Scheme for all types of beverage packaging
- Consumer research shows a 5 cents rebate will see over 70% of packaging returned
- Scheme should be designed to minimize impacts on consumer choice, cost and convenience
- A not-for-profit, industry-led “Packaging Exchange” as the PRS operator within a legal framework set by government

Hong Kong, 22 February 2021 - The *Drink Without Waste* initiative encourages the Hong Kong community to support government’s consultation on a Producer Responsibility Scheme (PRS) aimed at reducing waste from beverage consumption in Hong Kong (“PPRS”).

With a PRS for beverage packaging, Hong Kong can join the ranks of leading cities for waste reduction. Over the past 30 years, Hong Kong’s MSW has increased by 78% while its population grew by only 32%. In 2019, the daily disposal of municipal solid waste reached 1.47 kg/person, higher than disposal rates in other major cities around Asia and the world.

Drink Without Waste is focused on a highly visible waste category which it wants to keep out of the landfills and out of the environment. “We welcome the public consultation and encourage every stakeholder and the public to share their views for an early implementation of a PRS for beverage packaging in Hong Kong,” said Paul Zimmerman, Chairman of *Drink Without Waste*.

Paul explained that “the key objective of our Working Group is to recover 70-90% of used beverage packaging by 2025, while minimizing the impact on choice, cost and convenience for consumers. To achieve this, the *Drink Without Waste* initiative proposes to encompass all packaging types not just plastics; to allow a not-for-profit industry-led “Packaging Exchange” to operate the schemes; and to keep system costs low.”

Not just plastic bottles

The scheme should apply equally to all beverage container types – glass, plastic, pouches, metal and paper cartons – to ensure consumer choice is not impacted. It is easier to include all types of packaging under the legislation from the start than to add different materials later. If certain types of packaging such as plastics are singled out, producers and consumers might shift to other – less recyclable – packaging such as pouches or liquid cartons.

5 cents rebate on all returns

Research commissioned by *Drink Without Waste* found 41% of consumers would recycle plastic beverage containers regardless of incentives, and 33% said a rebate of 5 cents would trigger them to return their empties, implying that a rebate of 5 cents can attract over 70% of consumers to recycle their bottles.

Bigger rebates increase system cost. As the gap between the return value and the market value of used materials goes up, the incentive for fraudulent activities including importing bottles from overseas will increase.

“*Drink Without Waste* participants are experimenting with various voluntary recycling programs and it is working well.” said Paul Zimmerman. “Survey results and experience shows that a rebate of 5 cents is a good starting point. There is always room for the value to go up in the future, for example if and when recovery targets are missed. Going down is not an option. Key is for consumers to keep their recyclables separate, and for government and property managers to make it convenient to drop off used beverage packaging,” Paul Zimmerman added.

A collection network designed for Hong Kong

Whether retail stores are suitable for returning used beverage packaging needs more thought regarding reverse logistics, space constraints and hygiene risks. Retailers who joined *Drink Without Waste* are now implementing trial schemes. The outcomes will steer the beverage retailers’ role in the successful operation of a future scheme.

There is a role to play for RVMs in selected locations. RVMs can attract consumer attention, mechanise fraud prevention and rebate payments, and limit contamination. As they are more expensive than manual options in terms of capital and operations, any collection equipment should be judiciously selected for incremental benefits and specific uses.

The government consultation suggests a recycling levy of 50 – 65 cent per 500 ml beverage container (including a 10 cent rebate) which may not be acceptable for consumers. We should not give up on simple drop off points including recycling bins. We should also not ignore Hong Kong’s highly efficient and effective recycling network, the community of 400,000 informal recyclers including domestic helpers, cleaners, recycling shops and trucks.

Drink Without Waste expects to be able to do better.

Based on studies of producer responsibility schemes in other countries as well as local research, *Drink Without Waste* proposes a “*Packaging Exchange*” as a not-for-profit operator. A professional management team will quickly and efficiently manage the diverse collection network a successful PRS requires, within the legal framework drafted by Government. A diversified board comprised of different stakeholders, including government representatives will oversee the operation, while the Advisory Council on the Environment – or a new dedicated council – can be asked to monitor the outcomes.

About *Drink Without Waste*

Drink Without Waste is an initiative of the Single-Use Beverage Packaging Working Group, an alliance with participants across the beverage value chain, resources management and NGOs. Since December 2017, the Working Group, has developed strategies and actions to reduce waste from the consumption of beverages. Its participants are building recycling plants, enhancing the recyclability of packaging, and have rolled out different schemes to collect beverage packaging including plastic bottles and liquid cartons in Hong Kong.

Pledge to keep your beverage packaging separate by visiting: www.drinkwithoutwaste.org.

The position statement, research papers, and consumer survey results are available on *Drink Without Waste* website: <https://drinkwithoutwaste.org/resources-new/>.

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Single-Use Beverage Packaging Working Group

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Coordinate4u
Designing Hong Kong Limited
EcoDrive
Environmental Association Limited
Friends of the Earth (HK) Charity Limited
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The Dairy Farm Company Ltd.
The Green Earth
The Hong Kong Beverage Association Limited
The Hong Kong Jockey Club
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