

DEP inspects chain restaurants to understand trade's preparations for implementation of new regulation on disposable plastic products (with photos)

The relevant legislation for the regulation of disposable plastic tableware and other plastic products will come into effect on April 22 (Monday, Earth Day). The Director of Environmental Protection, Dr Samuel Chui, today (April 18) visited branches of three large chain restaurant groups in Hong Kong to understand the trade's preparations for the implementation of the new legislation.

Dr Chui chatted with persons-in-charge and front-line employees of restaurants to learn about the preparations made by the restaurant groups for the implementation of the new legislation, the types of alternative tableware and how they are being provided by the restaurants, customers' feedback, and other "plastic-free" measures of the restaurants.

Dr Chui said, "The three chain restaurant groups we visited today, with a total of more than 1 000 branches, have either switched to non-plastic tableware or are ready to do so when the new legislation comes into effect. Some shops shared that recently half of the customers chose to order takeaways without cutlery as the regulation of disposable plastic tableware will be implemented soon and public's environmental awareness keeps raising. To further promote environmental protection, the three restaurant groups will also implement different 'plastic-free' measures, including not providing disposable cutlery by default and launching incentive programmes to encourage customers to bring their own cutlery or lunch boxes. There is also a restaurant group planning to offer customers to purchase reusable stainless steel cutlery set to reduce single-use products. I understand that most of the other chain restaurants will also switch to 'plastic-free' on or before April 22. I sincerely thank the trade for their support and co-operation with the new policy. The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) has also carried out preparations and deployment plans for implementing the regulation, and we are confident that the first phase of regulation will be implemented smoothly."

In addition to inspecting large chain restaurants, the EPD team will also pay visits to nearly 20 000 small and medium-sized restaurants, as well as 20 000 retail stores, hotels and guesthouses in Hong Kong during the adaptation period in the first six months following the implementation to understand their operations. The department will focus on promotion and education, as well as providing appropriate advice and information to help the trade comply with the requirements under the new legislation. The EPD also suggests that businesses should strive to deplete their stocks of

regulated products within the adaptation period as soon as possible to avoid wastage. They should also make preparations for suitable alternatives as early as possible. During this period, no enforcement actions will be taken by the EPD.

To facilitate the understanding of the regulation by various sectors of the society, the EPD has launched a series of publicity and education work, including distributing trade-specific promotional leaflets, organising sectoral training sessions and launching the "Cut Plastic Use" thematic website (www.cuttheplastics.hk), as well as establishing the Green Tableware Platform (www.greentableware.hk) to assist the trade in procuring compliant alternatives.

Dr Chui said, "The legislation seeks to regulate disposable plastic tableware and other plastic products at source and focuses on their supply, and is not targeted at the general public. There is no need for the general public to worry about it. With the implementation of the new legislation, Hong Kong is expected to keep pace with the world in moving toward 'plastic-free'. We call on the trade and members of the public to support the 'plastic-and-disposable free' culture and join hands to protect the earth."

