

LCQ16: Recovery for reuse and upcycling of wood waste

Following is a question by the Hon Shiu Ka-fai and a written reply by the Secretary for Environment and Ecology, Mr Tse Chin-wan, in the Legislative Council today (October 30):

Question:

Some members of the local timber industry have relayed that Hong Kong generates a large amount of wood waste from areas such as home decoration (including replacement of furniture and floor boards) and construction works every year. However, due to the lack of effective arrangements for recovery for reuse and upcycling, most of these wood materials are disposed of at landfills. They are of the view that this not only depletes the space resources of the landfills, but also runs contrary to environmental protection principles as the waste is not converted into resources. They aspire that the Government will provide adequate support to enable the recovery for reuse and upcycling of used wood materials. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the amount of wood waste (excluding yard waste) generated in Hong Kong in each of the past five years, and set out in tables a breakdown of the amount and percentage by source (e.g. used furniture, floor boards and construction materials) and way of handling (e.g. disposed of at landfills and recovered for reuse);

(2) of the respective ways by which wood waste (excluding yard waste) is recovered for reuse and upcycled in Hong Kong currently, and the use of the products so produced; whether it has assessed the effectiveness of the relevant work; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(3) whether it has studied the practices adopted in other places for the recovery for reuse and upcycling of wood waste and the effectiveness of the relevant work; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(4) considering the factors required for the recovery for reuse and upcycling of wood waste, such as land and manpower, whether the authorities have plans to study the handling of wood waste jointly with Mainland cities in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area or other neighbouring cities; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(5) whether it will plan to work with chambers of commerce and relevant stakeholders of the local timber industry through negotiation and co-operation to improve the ways in which wood waste is recovered for reuse and upcycled and the effectiveness of the relevant work; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Government's support to the recycling industry is primarily based on the principles of market economy and fair competition. Meanwhile, consideration is also given to the feasibility of converting different types of waste into energy or resources for various types of recyclables, in order to enhance the cost effectiveness of recycling. One of the most important support measures is the provision of land resources specifically for recycling purposes, such as the EcoPark, at affordable rents for the recycling industry (including the waste wood recycling industry), to nurture and promote the development of local recycling industry, with a view to establishing a circular economy in the long run. At present, a waste wood recycler which mainly handles waste wooden pallets and tree trunks has been operating in the EcoPark since August 2017.

The reply to the question raised by the Hon Shiu Ka-fai is as follows:

(1) The disposal quantity of waste wood, its share in the total municipal solid waste (MSW), recovery quantity and recovery rate in the past five years are set out below:

Year	Waste Wood (Note)			
	Disposal quantity (tonnes per day)	Share in MSW	Recovery quantity (tonnes per day)	Recovery rate
2018	427	3.7%	16	3.6%
2019	348	3.1%	20	5.3%
2020	345	3.2%	11	3.2%
2021	262	2.3%	29	10.0%
2022	207	1.9%	32	13.5%

Note: Under the compilation framework of statistics regarding MSW adopted by the Environmental Protection Department (EPD), "waste wood" only includes waste made of wood such as timber, rattan, wooden pallets, wooden articles, wooden chopsticks. The EPD does not collect data and statistics on wooden furniture and waste wood generated from home renovation or construction works. The compilation of relevant statistics for 2023 is underway.

(2) At present, waste wood in Hong Kong after being processed by recyclers will be manufactured into products such as cat litter, wood chips, wood granules, furniture and outdoor paving materials. For instance, the foregoing recycler in the EcoPark has commenced operation since August 2017, treating an average of about 1 200 tonnes of waste wood per year in the past five years. The Government will continue to closely monitor the operational needs of the waste wood recycling industry and provide appropriate assistance as far as possible.

(3) and (4) In the course of formulating relevant policies with regard to the handling of different recyclables, the Government will make reference and pay heed to the development and relevant work in other places, as well as taking into account the actual circumstances in Hong Kong in the process of implementation. As for regional co-operation, the "Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area Ecological Environmental Protection Plan" promulgated by the Ministry of Ecology and Environment vigorously promotes the development of a "Zero Waste" Bay Area. With this opportunity, Guangdong and Hong Kong have established a close co-operation and exchange mechanism on environmental issues to jointly explore the capacity and modes for developing a circular economy in the region, leveraging the competitive advantages of the two places, complementing each other's strengths, and mutually developing green industries, green energy and related facilities.

(5) The EPD has been maintaining communication with stakeholders of the waste wood recycling industry, and supporting the waste wood recycling industry through the Recycling Fund. Since 2015, the Recycling Fund has approved six projects related to waste wood, involving a total funding of about \$7.8 million. These approved projects include support for environmental protection technology and furniture companies to collect and recycle waste wood, upcycling it into furniture and outdoor paving materials.