

Foodcourts Get First Eco-Label In Asia From Singapore Environment Council

Singapore, 19 January 2011 – Foodcourts are undeniably the most popular and ubiquitous communal spaces in Singapore. Their operations generate huge amounts of waste and consume massive amounts of energy and water every day. To address these environmental challenges, the Singapore Environment Council (SEC) today launched the Eco-Foodcourt certification to facilitate the adoption of environmentally sustainable practices among local foodcourt operators.

“It was reported last year that Singapore saw an alarming increase of 31 percent of waste generated since 2000, with food waste as one of the top five waste types. A natural choice was to focus on foodcourts as they are a great avenue to not only reduce waste but also to save resources. Foodcourts are a great platform for outreach on conservation and recycling because they are a big part of our culture in food-loving Singapore,” said Mr Howard Shaw, SEC Executive Director.

The Eco-Foodcourt certification assesses the environmental management system in a foodcourt. It addresses the key components of a food court’s environmental policies, air quality, the twin resource of water and energy management, as well as waste management. (Please see Annex 1 for the Fact Sheet on the Eco-Foodcourt Certification)

One of the mandatory requirements for attainment of the Eco-Foodcourt status is the non-usage of Styrofoam packaging as a takeaway option for customers. This is a tough stance taken by SEC to promote the reduction of the harmful impact on our environment and to introduce environmentally preferable options such as biodegradable packaging.

Guest-of-Honour, Dr Amy Khor, Minister of State, Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources, unveiled Singapore’s first Eco-Foodcourt, *The Deck at Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences (FASS)*, at the National University of Singapore (NUS). The NUS is the first educational institution to be awarded this certification. Also receiving this award at the launch was the Kopitiam @City Square Mall from the commercial food and beverage (F&B) sector.

“We are pleased to be awarded the Singapore Environment Council’s Eco-Foodcourt Certification which recognises the environmentally sustainable practices implemented at the The Deck at FASS. As the University continues to strive for positive solutions to pressing environmental problems, the adoption of these sustainable initiatives reduces the environmental impact of canteen operations. In our campus, while waste materials such as plastics, cardboard boxes, aluminum cans, cooked oil and food waste are recycled, promotional campaigns on bringing your own lunch boxes for takeaways and using fewer plastic bags drive home the message of being environmentally responsible,” said Mr Joseph P Mullinix, Deputy President (Administration), National University of Singapore.

Examples of environmentally sustainable practices implemented at the The Deck (NUS Arts Canteen) include organic food recycling, recycling of cooking oil, use of eco-friendly Microwave Packaging food boxes, use of reusable boxes and promotion of meat-free meals. Some of these practices are also adopted at other NUS canteens.

Kopitiam’s Corporate Communications Manager, Ms Goh Wee Ling, shared about the impact of going for the Eco-Foodcourt certification, “As we went about raising the awareness of our tenants on environmental sustainability, they began to see the importance of adopting practices friendly to the environment. A big bonus to the tenants for being environmentally responsible was the realisation that they were reducing their operating expenses when they managed the use of energy and water wisely. Kopitiam is happy to partner SEC in their mission to reach out to more people with the important message of being eco-conscious.”

At this event, the SEC also took the opportunity to launch its new logo. SEC has, in the last 15 years, grown from a small non-governmental organisation (NGO) that provides environmental outreach and education to businesses and the community to become an authority in the endorsement of environmental standards and the promotion of best practices. The new logo represents both its current role in highlighting environmental sustainability issues to the community, and reflects its ongoing role as an expert in framing new opportunities that others may not see.

With the launch of the Eco-Foodcourt certification, SEC is confident there will be an increase in the adoption of food recycling practices among foodcourt operators, and the generation of better

quality recyclables as a result. The SEC also plans to launch certification for two other sectors under its eco-labelling scheme by the third quarter of 2011.

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Established in 1995, the Singapore Environment Council (SEC) is an independently managed, non-government organisation that nurtures, facilitates and co-ordinates environmental causes in Singapore. SEC's work is founded on three pillars of action – Firstly, partnership with the people, private and public sectors of Singaporean society, to nurture a culture aligned with sustainable development concepts. Secondly, SEC rewards environmental excellence through awards schemes and product endorsement programmes, such as the Singapore Green Labelling Scheme. Thirdly, the SEC collaborates with partners to develop and implement training and learning programmes to build competencies in environmental sustainability within companies, thus keeping our business leaders ahead of the curve. Visit SEC website: <http://www.sec.org.sg>

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FACT SHEET ON ECO-FOODCOURT CERTIFICATION

SEC's Eco Labelling Scheme

Singapore Environment Council (SEC) is known in Singapore as the authority in environmental matters. The council developed the Singapore Green Labeling Scheme to serve as an environmental standard and certification mark to help the public make informed choices about environmentally-preferable products.

To further the environmental cause, SEC envisaged a line of eco certification to **promote and raise the environmental standard of businesses by sectors**. With the seeking of good eating places generally recognised as Singapore's national past-time, SEC has chosen to focus on the Foodcourt sector of the food & beverage industry to start this outreach.

The other certifications in the pipeline are the Eco-Retail and Eco-Community Club certifications. These complement the existing Eco-Office certification launched in June 2002 and the more recent Eco-Hotel certification launched in Oct 2010.



About SEC's Eco-Foodcourt Certification

Q1. What is the Eco-Foodcourt Certification?

This is a certification issued by SEC to certify that a food court is environmentally friendly and employs sustainable practices. SEC promotes and administers this certification while an external auditor provides an independent report on the foodcourt.

Q2. What is SEC's objective with this introduction of the Eco-Foodcourt Certification?

The objectives of this certification are to

- Raise awareness of environmental and sustainability issues among the community and foodcourt owners, regardless of the size of their business, and the community
- Reduce the amount of waste and other resources such as energy, water, and packaging, used in the daily operation of food courts

- Optimise the results of outreach and educational efforts by tapping on a ready flow of human traffic at the food courts

Q3. What are the benefits of this certification?

- 1) Recognition as an environmental leader among counterparts in the F&B industry
- 2) Increases influence on consumer preference by equipping them with a way to make informed green choices
- 3) Savings from reduced water and energy consumption.
- 4) Third-party endorsement by an independent, non-profit organisation

Q4. Who can apply for the SEC Eco-Foodcourt certificate?

A food & beverage establishment, of any size, that features multiple food vendors, and a common area for self-service dining. The establishment can be in an indoor or outdoor setting.

Q5. What are the criteria used for assessment under this Eco-Foodcourt certification?

The key assessment criteria include

- 1) An environmental management system in place. (E.g. Regular internal green committee meetings with stall vendors to track performance and compliance to environmental sustainability policy)
- 2) Efficient use of energy and water.
- 3) Waste management system in place for segregation of waste and recycling
- 4) Communication and education to stall vendors and patrons to raise awareness of environmental initiatives and messages.
- 5) Use of environmentally-preferable resources such as non-styrofoam packaging, reusable or sustainable packaging or utensils.