

SECLITE

JANUARY TO MARCH 2017

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE SINGAPORE ENVIRONMENT COUNCIL

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

DEAR READERS,

Greetings and welcome to the first issue of SECLITE 2017! The New Year promises a stream of exciting developments at SEC, including the much awaited enhanced Singapore Green Labelling Scheme (SGLS) for pulp and paper products, and our new learning trail, "The Business of Nature".

So let's get down to business because the voices of responsible consumers have just become louder. Companies, it is time to embrace environmental sustainability in your operations.

Profits and the environment are not mutually exclusive – our new trail will show you why, and how.

As for budding journalists out there, draw inspiration from Wang Yan, our Asian Environmental Journalism Awards winner, as she shares the reasons driving her passion.

And if you feel you have got more flair baking than writing, try whipping up a Mandarin Orange Pound Cake with our recipe. It will transform leftovers into a tangy dessert where two servings just won't do.

Last but not least, read on to discover just how much fun we had at the UP Market last month, and what the winners of our Schools' Recycling Bin Design Competition has to share about their experience.

ENJOY READING!



MS ISABELLA LOH



Singapore
Environment
Council



BY CHONG KHAI SIN,
HEAD OF ECO-CERTIFICATIONS

Corporate responsibility has gone beyond the confines of the communications department to the wider reaches of the corporate structure including procurement and sourcing units, earning itself a strong foothold among traditional indicators like price competitiveness and quality.

While this leadership provided a friendly nudge to their wider network of suppliers and manufacturers, it also surfaced the companies' lack of understanding on complex environmental issues. This brings us to appreciate the value of the eco-labels, which does all the hard work of researching then endorsing worthy products.

BUT IS THE PROBLEM SOLVED?

Not just yet. There are more than 450 eco-labelling schemes in the world. Each of them seeks to differentiate their products by the many different aspects they can choose to focus on. For instance, some schemes take into account the product's lifecycle, while others may look at specific criteria with high environmental impact. Thrown into the mix are labels that provide environmental data of the product and manufacturer's self-declared environmental claims. To add on to these multiple facets to consider, there is also the monumental task for people to differentiate green-washing from green labelling.

SO WHAT ARE THE SOLUTIONS?

Look out for members of bodies like Global Eco-labelling Network (GEN) and International Social and Environmental Accreditation and Labelling (ISEAL) Alliance. Both GEN and ISEAL are non-profit membership-based organisations whose missions are to protect the environment by improving and strengthening eco-labelling and sustainability standards systems. Members need to undergo strict audit and member peer review processes, thus increasing their credibility.

Another indicator of the ecolabels' credibility is the recognition given by leading green building rating systems such as the BCA Green Mark (Singapore), LEED (United States), and BREEAM (United Kingdom). Renowned eco-labels which are members of GEN or ISEAL include the Blue Angel (Germany), EU Eco label, Nordic Swan, Japan Eco-mark, Forest Stewardship Council, the Roundtable for Sustainable Palm Oil, and of course, our very own Singapore Green Labelling Scheme.

Now, all these sounds pretty decent and gets you out of the maze. But what is so fantastic about well-managed eco-labelling schemes is that it stimulates development in sustainable manufacturing locally and drive improvements in the environmental performance of products. For example, the demand for sustainable packaging has driven the recycling of paper as well as innovative sourcing like the use of cocoa husk to produce food-grade paper. Having a vibrant market for eco-labelled products also encourages fellow manufacturers to compete and continuously improve their product and this is great news for our goal of a sustainable future!

If you are new to green procurement or would like to apply for the Singapore Green Labelling Scheme (SGLS), contact us at greenlabel@sec.org.sg.

PLANTING SEEDS FOR A BETTER ENVIRONMENT

BY WANG YAN,
ASIAN ENVIRONMENTAL JOURNALISM AWARD WINNER
(2015–2016)



My enthusiasm in environmental journalism started at the turn of the century, soon after graduating with an MA degree in English literature. An inborn love for nature had me in sync with the environment, and propelled me to become a reporter/editor for NewsChina Magazine in 2008. It was only natural then, that I launched the environment section of the magazine to reach out to the masses.

Since then, my passion had me delving into the environmental issues of my homeland. I have always believed in what photographer Robert Capa said, "If your pictures aren't good enough, you're not close enough." It is my understanding therefore, that apart from physical proximity, empathy is vital in my delivery to readers. Bearing this in mind, I was able to attain trust from my interviewees and amplify their voices.

My efforts in promoting environmental protection and disclosing information on environmental degradation serve three purposes. Firstly, to inform readers of what's happening; secondly, to help victims speak out so that their situation can improve; and thirdly, to provide information and feedback to the government.

China has witnessed rapid economic development, and along with it, widespread environmental and ecological degradation. Major cities including Beijing and Tianjin have taken the toll. By focusing on such issues, significant changes have taken place as the central government begins to realise the dire situation. Now with top leaders emphasising the importance of ecology, local authorities begin to take heed and act accordingly.

Wildlife species such as the Giant Panda, Amur Tiger, and Tibetan Antelope, have seen significant revival as they grow in numbers. And with the latest National Park System to be planned, local governments have taken extra measures in animal protection and environment improvements.

All these changes can be achieved in China because of the united effort of environmentalists, the media, NGOs, and academia. In particular, after the ratification of the Paris Agreement, China has started to play a leading role in promoting green financing among its global partners. With the increase in efforts of practising carbon trading and green credit, the future looks optimistic.

I feel much pride and honour to have the opportunity to work as an environment journalist, focusing on issues that truly matter to mankind. My personal endeavour is likened to a seed that I plant, which will grow, mature and flower in time for all to enjoy.

FRESH AIR! AT AN ALTITUDE OF
4,300 METERS IN QINGHAI



THE NATURE OF BUSINESS OR BUSINESS OF NATURE?



BY ZAC LIM, MANAGER (BIODIVERSITY)

There is no doubt that humanity has benefited tremendously from nature. She provides food, shelter, energy, and an intricate ecosystem that generates clean air and water to sustain us, the inhabitants. More than just these delightful treasures, nature also presents us with gems of knowledge like the art of sustainable business.

If you have seen swarms of ants or termites, they probably look very chaotic, but the fact is there is order within. Their swarm behaviour allows them to be a highly effective functioning unit in achieving complex tasks including moving large resources across difficult terrains and weaving a nest with leaves. They are also capable of building an enormous mound that is a million times its size and then regulating the temperature within. Applying this lesson to organisational management, an organisation can yield far more responsive, flexible and robust organisational behaviour than a typical top-down approach.

Another example would be the Common Mahang which has a mutualistic relationship with the ants that it shelters and feeds. The ants would protect it from herbivores, pathogenic fungi, other invasive insects, and even bite off vines from other plants that try to attach themselves to it, posing a risk of strangulation to the Common Mahang. This has allowed them to thrive in a niche within the ecosystem, much like how a modern corporation must find its foothold in the business ecosystem by cultivating diverse mutually beneficial collaborations with its stakeholders.

With 3.8 billion years of experience, the nature of today is definitely a great mentor. A survivor who has demonstrated resilience and adaptability, just imagine how much she can teach you to unleash the full potential of your organisation. Many conglomerates like Virgin Group, Tata Enterprises and Unilever, are already on the wagon and have shown adaptations to nature's learning in developing a sustainable business model.

Wait no more and join SEC on our inaugural "The Business of Nature" learning trail. During the guided nature walk, we will reveal the business secrets of nature, and how you can transform your organisation and even yourself to take on the future ahead.



THE COMMON MAHANG PROVIDES THE ANTS WITH FOOD, WHICH ARE FOUND UNDER THE SURFACE OF THE STIPULES (BROWNISH RED STRUCTURES).



CONTACT US AT BIODIVERSITY@SEC.ORG.SG TO FIND OUT MORE.



HANDS-ON

IT'S A PIECE OF CAKE!

BY NURAMIRAH SUYIN BINTE ZAIHAN,
ENVIRONMENT ENGINEER (TRAINING AND EDUCATION)



For a small city state, we generate an astonishing amount of food waste. Just last year, each of us wasted an equivalent of two bowls of food every day, and it becomes worse during festive periods, surging a further 20%!

There are many reasons to that but one common scenario is that as hosts, we usually prepare a lot of food so that our guests do not go home hungry. This however, leaves us with the mundane task of dealing with leftovers. For my household, tidbits and mandarin oranges top the leftover list after every Chinese New Year. I didn't want to throw them away but eating all that citrus can be quite dull, and overtime, the love letters will also lose its crispiness (or *lao hong*). It then dawned on me to use these leftovers to bake a cake. So here it is, the CNY Mandarin Orange Pound Cake!

RECIPE



- 1¾ cup (270g) plain or all-purpose flour
- 1½ tsp baking powder
- 1½ sticks (170g) softened butter
- ¾ cup (170g) sugar
- 3 large fresh eggs
- ¾ cup (180ml) milk
- 3 oz (100ml) orange juice
- 1 tsp of vanilla extract
- Orange zest from 1 orange

METHOD:

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F (180°C).
2. Grease and flour an 8 inch by 4 inch loaf pan.
3. Sift the plain flour and baking powder into a medium sized bowl and mix it up.
4. Mix the butter and sugar in a large bowl until it is light and fluffy.
5. Crack the eggs in one at a time as you continue mixing.
6. Add in half portions of the following in order: flour mixture, milk, orange juice, then whisk the mixture gently.
7. Add in vanilla extract, the remaining flour mixture, milk, and orange juice and mix till it becomes consistent.
8. Fold the orange zest into the mixture.
9. Pour the batter into the loaf pan and bake for 50 minutes.
10. Insert a wooden toothpick into the centre of the cake. If the wooden pick comes out clean, it means the cake is ready!
11. Leave it on the pan to cool for 10 minutes, and then remove the cake from the pan and cool it on a wire rack. It is now ready to serve!



Other ways to reduce food waste:
Share them with your colleagues. There will definitely be that one colleague who doesn't mind munching on those Chinese New Year goodies.

Donate your unopened goodies to Food Bank Singapore. They are a charity which distributes food to the needy.

Label and display your goodies prominently and consume them before they expire.

THE UP MARKET

OUR MORNING SHIFT TEAM WITH GUEST-OF-HONOUR DR NG ENG HEN, MINISTER FOR DEFENCE AND GRASSROOTS ADVISER TO BISHAN-TOA PAYOH GROS, AND MS DENISE PHUA, MAYOR OF CENTRAL SINGAPORE DISTRICT.



600 HOURS · 150 CANS · 50 BOTTLES LOTS OF FUN AND FRIENDSHIP



On 18 December 2016, SEC partnered Central Singapore Community Development Council (CSCDC) at their annual upcycling event, The UP Market @ Central Singapore. Over 100 Earth Helpers put together an amazing Christmas-themed exhibit made from 4 wooden pallets, 150 Coca-Cola drink cans and 50 bottles! During the course of its construction, our friends from Ministry of Culture, Community & Youth and Starbucks also came to show their support by lending their muscles, and Stolt Nielsen Limited even chipped in a table made from a disused forklift tyre!

Reaching out to about 500 members of the public through quizzes, photo moments, and a series of exciting upcycling workshops on crafting Christmas gift-tags and flour ornaments, check out what we heard on the ground.



HAVING FUN CRAFTING LITTLE CHRISTMAS TREES WITH FLOUR AT THE UPCYCLING WITH EARTH HELPERS WORKSHOP

"The UP Market @ Central Singapore was started to bring the community together to contribute creatively towards a simpler lifestyle – a lifestyle that reduces waste and respects the resources we already have. We want to promote ways by which our residents can upcycle their unwanted items and slowly but surely refuse or reduce wastage. Collectively, we can all play a part in building an environmentally-conscious and sustainable community."

Ms Denise Phua, Mayor of Central Singapore District

"The UP Market was very meaningful. I have gained the confidence from the SEC team to do more in 2017. Today's event gives me the opportunity to spread the green message to others."

Swee Keow, Earth Helper

"I love how this event teaches kids about the importance of recycling and reuse and reduce wastage in a fun and engaging way."

Belinda, Workshop participant



EMAIL TRAINING@SEC.ORG.SG TO LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR UPCYCLING WORKSHOPS.



OUR WINNERS!

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT!

SCHOOLS' RECYCLING BIN DESIGN COMPETITION

EXIT
ABOVE-16-YEAR-OLD CATEGORY
LONDON SCHOOL OF BUSINESS & FINANCE



DESIGN CONCEPT

Our Go-Green club members were looking for a design which is both functional, compact and user-friendly, hence the birth of our one-stop bin. With five compartments (general waste, glass, paper, plastic and paper), it reminds people to segregate the recyclables properly and also makes it easy for users to disconnect any compartment which is filled up, and bring it to the public recycling bins. We believe in simplicity, and that is the guiding principle behind the foundation for our practical design. In fact, during the Green Living exhibition 2016 held at Marina Bay Sands Convention Centre, many visitors raved about the feasibility of our design.



MESSAGE

Our research led us to realise the magnitude of the recycling situation in Singapore - Low household recycling rate and a general lack of awareness on proper recycling procedures. On the bright side, we met many inspiring people who motivated us in our mission to create a recycling bin that gives people no reason not to recycle! We hope that our intention to make recycling more convenient and as residents' second nature will come through in the design. Of course, having the right mentality and discipline is key for it to work. So now that we have provided the "structure", we hope that the residents will also do their part to help save the environment for a better future!

OUR WINNERS!

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT!

SCHOOLS' RECYCLING BIN DESIGN COMPETITION

BELOW-16-YEAR-OLD CATEGORY
PCF SPARKLETOTS PRESCHOOL @ TAMPINES WEST BLK 140-938 (KN)



DESIGN CONCEPT

FUN, INTERACTIVE AND ADDICTIVE!

Recycling is a habit that has to start from young, and experience tells us that these elements will help spark that flame and keep it going in them throughout their schooling years and adulthood. Play is an important factor in the children's learning and development process, and that is why the lid of each compartment features a different game with hints about the correct type of recyclables it accepts.

Our base design is also inspired by LEGO toy bricks. Their placement flexibility symbolises the creativity and ingenuity of children's minds, where incredible art pieces are created from the simple blocks. The design also makes it very portable and easy for the children to bring it to the public recycling bins when it is full. More importantly, not only do our children learn how to sort their recyclables properly, we noticed that they are now actively searching for materials to recycle!



The journey behind this project affirms our belief that it is not premature to teach preschoolers about recycling. Our children have proven such with their involvement, enthusiasm and advocacy. As educators, we play a crucial role in modelling the correct behaviour and mind-set. Together, our little steps go a long way in saving planet Earth!



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