

## WASTE DISPOSAL

# Food segregation law long overdue

To combat food waste, the Seberang Prai Municipal Council has initiated food waste segregation at the source, focusing on diverting organic waste from the general waste stream.

On the other hand, the Penang Island City Council lacks a dedicated organic waste management programme.

Here, the Consumers Association of Penang (CAP) has been active in promoting organic waste recovery through composting in homes.

CAP has partnered with schools and residential complexes in Penang to introduce composting techniques suitable for various settings, addressing the challenges faced by apartment dwellers.

However, the lack of legal requirements presents a barrier to the widespread adoption of composting, with many people throwing their food waste in with regular trash.

Additionally, there are no provisions in by-laws that address food waste from retailers.

CAP has urged officials to create policies and guidelines for controlling food waste in grocery stores and hotels to address Penang's food waste.

To educate people and food retail-

ers about food waste and its effects, CAP has also advocated for the creation of a national zero-food-waste education campaign.

To mitigate the inconsistency in waste segregation implementation, introducing by-laws that mandate food waste separation at the source for solid waste generators, including retailers, in Act 672 and Act 171, could address environmental concerns, like reducing greenhouse gas emissions and boosting food waste recycling and treatment efficiency.

It's also advisable for the authorities to draft uniform legislation harmonising the provisions of Act 672 and Act 171.

By establishing mechanisms that can foster collaboration, information sharing and coordination in waste management efforts among various agencies, uniform legislation for food waste separation could reduce the amount of solid waste disposed of in landfills.

Through these mechanisms, urgent issues, such as overflowing solid and food waste, could also be addressed, ultimately increasing the effectiveness of the waste management system.



Scavengers looking for recyclable items in the Nibong Tebal landfill in Penang. The authorities can prevent food waste from ending up in landfills. FILE PIC

The collaborative efforts of SWCorp and local authorities are crucial in moving to more sustainable solid waste management practices, specifically by preventing food waste from ending up in landfills.

Alternatives, such as composting and anaerobic digester machines, should be considered to replace landfill usage as the primary disposal method for retail solid waste.

Consequently, efficient food waste management hinges on the preliminary

requirement of waste segregation before conversion to energy can occur.

Nevertheless, given that the regulatory framework governing this industry is in its infancy, the pursuit of sustainability in retail food waste management may present difficulties.

There is no legislation that addresses food waste management specifically, and the regulatory frameworks that are in place, such as Acts 672 and 171, do not have a retail sector focus.

Retailers manage their waste on

their own, which highlights the lack of thorough regulatory framework.

Thus, all parties, including SWCorp, local governments, and the public, must participate to advance the sustainability of food waste management in the retail and household sectors.

Sustainable environment, better air quality, better waste management, and sanitation won't be possible until then.

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