

Consumer's Right for Eco-friendly products and packaging

Written by Administrator

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I would like to inquire how can Malaysian consumers persuade the manufacturers and suppliers for our consumption especially food packagings, to come out with eco-friendly, recyclable or biodegradable packaging material. I recently found out that most of our food packaging are made of laminate plastics that are non-recyclable and non-biodegradable. And obviously, the overflow or rubbish and inadequate of landfill are caused by our own consumption.

I don't see as boycotting products would solve this problem, because we consume everyday. Even our fish and meats are packed in styrofoams and cling wrap. As I researched on the internet, many developed countries are trying to reverse these problems by implementing "cradle to cradle" products and recyclable bi-products. Making small changes like 'less is more' packaging. But we, as a developing country, are to engross by development and materialism, in which shopping malls is the heaven for all consumers and the landfill next to our housing area is hell that we ourselves have created.

SO FOMCA, I would like to know, how can I, as an individual consumer, initiate the spark to create our consumer rights to make greener choices. And I also would like to know what FOMCA have done to create this awareness. I hope to hear form you soonest.

Thank you.

Regards,

Ophie R. Riff
recyclemalaysia.blogspot.com

Reply by Mr Piara, Environment Desk FOMCA

Dear Ophie,

I appreciate the email to us. In deed you make a difference. I have done some surveys among those who use paper based packaging, especially stalls. There is not much difference in charges especially after the recent fuel hike on the packaging materials.

There should be mandatory move towards this, i.e. government can make it mandatory via regulations (food regulation) to pack it in such manner. Other materials can be governed by the new solid waste act (2007). The department is still struggling to come up with regulations as there are so many interested parties involved. However, once they are fully functional they can request under (extended producers responsibility) to reduce packaging.

If you feel you can do that, that's a start. Secondly, get friends and relatives together to change into good habits. Once you start to bring your own container to pack, the food others may look at you differently (so Malaysian) but don't give up, you may spark others to change. You can also talk to the stalls to make small changes. I personally carry a container as well as pack my own food to work. Write in a memorandum with your group of friends to supermarkets to change. In fact super market can allow us to bring our own containers to pack fish, meat, etc. but there are those who misuse this. Currently they allow us to bring our own bags for shopping. So start small, many Malaysians wants easy way out, as I said, you make a difference. If there are stalls or shops that refuse to change to minimal things, as a consumer you have a choice. You can always go to another. Currently we need to wait for the Solid waste act to be fully implemented to push for changes. That FOMCA will do time to time.

Cradle to cradle concept is still in cradle for Malaysian scenario. It will take time to develop. Developed nations move towards it basically due to their lack of raw material supply.

I hope my lengthy explanation helps you. There is also a company Ecopak doing palm oil fibre based packaging and few others. They may be a help to this stalls.