

MEDIA RELEASE

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FUNDING SUPPORT TO COFFEESHOPS AND FOOD COURTS FOR INSTALLATION OF TRAY RETURN FACILITIES

Singapore, 16 April 2021 – To encourage operators of public dining places to keep their dining environment clean, the National Environment Agency (NEA) will provide co-funding support to coffeeshops and food courts for the installation of tray return facilities at their premises and for the purchase of trays. NEA will also install more tray and used crockery return racks as well as provide more trays at NEA-managed hawker centres to facilitate the return of trays and used crockery by patrons.

2 The Clean Tables Support Scheme (CTSS) will provide funding support by defraying 50 per cent of the cost of installing tray return facilities (e.g. tray return stations, tray return racks, or tray return trolleys etc.) and/or the purchase of trays, capped at \$2,500 per premises. The CTSS will run from 1 May 2021 to 31 October 2021. Interested operators can refer to <https://www.nea.gov.sg/our-services/public-cleanliness/Clean-Tables-Support-Scheme> from 1 May 2021 for more details on the qualifying criteria and application process.

3 The move to provide support to operators at these premises to install tray return facilities forms part of the Clean Tables Campaign, which has been underway since February this year. With CTSS, we hope to incentivise and accelerate the provision of tray return facilities to support the Clean Tables Campaign – which remind users and stakeholders of public dining places to keep the tables clean for the next diner.

4 The average age of cleaners is 60 years old today. A more socially conscious, self-service concept where diners take care of their own crockery and trays is a more sustainable way forward to keep our public dining places clean and hygienic. With every diner doing his/her part, this will also make the cleaners' jobs easier, as they can then focus on their work to clean and sanitise tables, as well as sort and distribute trays and crockery to the stalls.

5 The Singapore Food Agency (SFA) will continue to engage and work with operators to improve tray return facilities and systems. Operators are encouraged to tap on available funding such as the CTSS, which can be used to upgrade existing or purchase new tray return infrastructure. NEA will also install 75 more tray and used crockery return racks at hawker centres in addition to the existing 900 today, to assist diners with returning their trays. NEA will also provide each hawker centre cooked-food stallholder with 50 more new trays to ensure sufficient tray return infrastructure.

Coffeeshop and foodcourt operators indicate interest in tapping on Clean Tables Support Scheme

6 Coffeeshop and food court operators have steadily pledged support for the campaign since its launch in February. Strategies employed by food establishments to encourage patrons to keep

the premises clean include installing tray and used crockery return racks at accessible points and streamlining the workflow of their cleaners, so as to allow cleaners to focus on cleaning and sanitising tables. As part of outreach efforts, these establishments have also displayed posters, standees and wobblers within their premises, to remind patrons to return their trays and keep the tables clean for the next diner.

7 With the roll out of the CTSS, operators have indicated interest in tapping on the funding to build up the tray return infrastructure at their premises.

8 For example, the Chang Cheng Mee Wah chain of coffeeshops plans to progressively build up tray return infrastructure in their coffeeshops. Currently, about 20% of their coffeeshops are equipped with tray return racks and/or tray return points. Chang Cheng Mee Wah intends to tap on the CTSS to install tray return infrastructure in all their remaining premises.

9 “Our target is for 100% of our coffeeshops to have tray return facilities,” said Mr Soh Koon Ghee, Group General Manager of Chang Cheng Mee Wah. “As a coffeeshop operator, it’s our responsibility to provide our customers with a clean and comfortable dining environment. We would like to encourage our customers to partner with us by keeping the tables clean for the next user.”

10 Food court chain, Koufu, also plans to tap on the CTSS to defray costs of tray return infrastructure for their upcoming food courts and coffeeshops. They currently have over 40 premises with tray return infrastructure in place.

11 “Koufu recognises the importance of the Clean Tables Campaign. Currently, we have put in place various tray return infrastructure in our food courts, which allow our cleaners to focus to sanitising the tables,” said Mr Choo Teck Chuan, Chief Operating Officer of Koufu.

Review of Table Cleaning Workflow and Training of cleaners

12 In tandem with installing additional tray return racks at hawker centres to facilitate the return of trays and used crockery by patrons, NEA will also be working with stakeholders on a revised table-cleaning workflow.

13 The revised table-cleaning workflow is intended to complement the return of trays and used crockery by patrons, to facilitate a more effective and efficient process in keeping tables clean for all patrons. In this effort, there is also awareness and recognition of the challenges faced by a progressively ageing cleaning workforce. NEA has been consulting stakeholders such as the Environmental Management Association of Singapore (EMAS), cleaning companies, and cleaners, in co-developing the revised table-cleaning workflow. The return of trays and used crockery by patrons, coupled with a revised table-cleaning workflow is crucial to the faster turnaround of tables especially during peak meal times and to improving overall cleanliness outcomes, which will benefit both hawkers and patrons. Stallholders must do their part as well, to ensure their trays are washed regularly to safeguard public health and hygiene.

14 To improve the skills and competencies of cleaners at coffeeshops, food courts and hawker centres, cleaners are encouraged to attend the WSQ course “Foodshop Hygiene Maintenance” to equip themselves with the appropriate skillsets and knowledge required in the cleaning of foodshops.

15 “The cleaning industry is facing manpower challenges and the pool of cleaning staff is limited. The Clean Tables Campaign, which call on patrons to return their trays and used crockery, can greatly help alleviate manpower constraints. Cleaners can then be redeployed to focus on important cleaning tasks, such as sorting crockery and sanitising tables. There is no worry that the cleaning staff might lose their jobs,” said Mr Tony Chooi, President of the Environmental Management Association of Singapore.

Playing a Part in Clean Tables

16 Having clean tables will also help to address public hygiene issues at local hawker centres and coffeeshops. For instance, it has been observed that hawker centres with high tray and used crockery return rates by diners experienced fewer cases of feedback on bird nuisance. Diners can support the campaign to keep public dining places clean by returning their used crockery and trays, removing of used tissue paper and wet wipes, and disposables to allow cleaners to focus on maintaining the tray return tracks, cleaning and sanitising tables.

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About National Environment Agency

The National Environment Agency (NEA) is the leading public organisation responsible for ensuring a clean and sustainable environment for Singapore. Its key roles are to improve and sustain a clean environment, promote sustainability and resource efficiency, maintain high public health standards, provide timely and reliable meteorological information, and encourage a vibrant hawker culture. NEA works closely with its partners and the community to develop and spearhead environmental and public health initiatives and programmes. It is committed to motivating every individual to care for the environment as a way of life, in order to build a liveable and sustainable Singapore for present and future generations.

For more information, visit www.nea.gov.sg

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About Singapore Food Agency

As the lead agency for food-related matters, the Singapore Food Agency's mission is to ensure and secure a supply of safe food for Singapore. SFA works hand-in-hand with the industry and consumers to grow our three "food baskets" – Diversify import sources, Grow local, and Grow overseas, as well as ensure food safety from farm-to-fork.

SFA also partners food businesses to strengthen capabilities, tap on technologies to raise productivity, undertake research to develop new lines of business, and catalyse industry transformation to ensure food security.

For more information on SFA, visit www.sfa.gov.sg.