



To : Panel on Environmental Affairs, LegCo

Friends of the Earth (HK)'s Position on Municipal Solid Waste Charging Plan

Support Waste Charging

Reduce Waste Before Building Incinerators

Friends of the Earth (HK) said that the per capita waste generation reached 2.69 kg in 2010. It is a record high, 11% more than the figure in 2005, superseding the other three Asian dragons. FoE (HK) urges the Environment Bureau to implement waste charging plan soon and believes the most effective way to reduce waste at its source is to charge by waste volume.

1. Support Waste Charging and Reduce Waste Citywide

Waste charging is the stimulus for waste reduction. FoE (HK)'s visit to South Korea last year found it lead the other three Asian Dragons in waste reduction. A South Korean environment official said that the public would not find the incentive to separate waste, even after the implementation of recycling measures and producer responsibility scheme, if they did not need to pay for waste disposal. The key to source reduction lies at the charge. South Korea has reduced its waste by 44% since 1995, which puts current per capita waste disposal at 0.44kg, a third of Hong Kong's per capita figure of 1.22kg.

2. Charge by Volume, A Fair Deal

Friends of the Earth (HK) emphasized that it was only fair to charge waste by volume, which would create an economic incentive for waste reduction. Friends of the Earth (HK) commissioned The University of Hong Kong's Public Opinion Programme for a survey of 1007 citizens who were above the age of 18 in February. The survey found that 52% of the public was in favour of waste charging by volume, with only 35% being against it. In spite of little promotion to encourage responses to the consultation, more than half of the public indicated their support for waste charging. FoE (HK) believes the support is evidence of the public concern for waste reduction action that calls for the

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attention of the new Chief Executive.



(Photo : Franchised garbage bags used in Seoul. A bag with a volume of 10 litre costs HK\$1.17. The ones in the photo are 100 litre bags and each costs HK\$12.3.)

The survey showed that the public preferred the price of sixty cents for a franchised garbage bag. It is believed that the public might have used the plastic bag levy, \$0.5 per bag, as a yardstick for setting the price of a franchised garbage bag in the survey. Lack of suggestion for bag prices in the consultation paper also fails to give the public any reference to come up with a reasonable price.

FoE (HK) believes too low a price of a franchised garbage bag cannot provide enough stimuli for waste reduction, neither can it reflect polluters pay principle. So the bag price should be tied to waste treatment cost. The waste treatment cost in Hong Kong stands at \$0.38¹ per kilogram. For a family of four with a waste disposal volume of 3.48kg a

¹ According to the Environmental Protection Department's, 'A Policy Framework for the Management of Municipal Solid Waste in Hong Kong (2005-2014)', the costs of landfill operations, waste collection and transfer amounted to about \$1.3 billion in 2004 and the municipal solid waste disposal amount was 3.4 million tonnes in that year (page12). Based on this data, the waste treatment cost for a kilogram of waste should be \$0.38.



day², the waste treatment cost for the family would be \$1.3. The fee is comparable to Taipei and Korea's rates.

3. Basic Allowance to Help Grassroots

FoE (HK) recommends subsidies be given to the grassroots for provision of a certain amount of free garbage bags at the initial stage of the implementation. FoE (HK) believes that if the government can supplement this with food waste collection and educate the public for waste recycling, the monthly waste disposal fee would be only a few dollars. Taipei residents paid \$38 a month when the waste charging policy was implemented. The expenditure has dropped to about \$12 a month by now.

4. Establish Food Waste Recycling Channel

We will not take waste charging as a panacea for the problems. South Korea and Taiwan examples show us that recycling of food waste, glass and beverage containers, plus packaging materials, needs to be done to effectively cut waste. A system of prosecution and monitoring has to be built to ensure the success of the waste reduction mechanism.

According to the survey, among the respondents, 62% of them said they would separate their waste more proactively if waste charging was in place. Some of them, who already have a habit of waste recycling, said that existing recycling channels needed to be augmented, and 21% of them demanded the installation of glass bins, while 18% of them said that food waste bins should be added .

FoE (HK) pointed out that the benefits of waste charging as well as an enhanced and holistic recycling system were many. First, the waste disposal fee would be greatly reduced. Second, the need for landfill expansion and incinerators would be eased. And third, the savings from reduced waste treatment costs could be put to better use.

² According to the EPD's waste disposal statistics for 2010, the per capita domestic waste disposal amount was 0.87kg, so a family of four's waste disposal amount should have been 3.48kg/day.



(Photo: Food waste bins in Seoul are placed on the streets and in the housing estates. They are emptied everyday so that there won't be odor coming out from perishables due to lengthened storage.)

5. Central Fund for the Development of Green Industry

Friends of the Earth (HK) would recommend setting up of a central fund for the income from garbage fees and funds be given to the waste recycling industry to provide more jobs for the grassroots.

South Korea has significantly pushed up the recycling rates after the implementation of waste charging. The income from waste charges is then invested in waste recycling plants that hire many low-skilled workers. Creation of jobs and recycling of waste were both accomplished.



(Photo: Income from waste charges was used to set up recycling plants like this one. The plant owner said that creation of jobs was beneficial to the society even if the plant may not be as profitable as it could be.)

6. Implement Waste Charging Review Incinerator Plans

The Government has been strongly advocating for the construction of incinerators, which will take from seven to eight years, as a solution to waste problems. With just enough political will, a combination of waste charging, implementation of producer responsibility scheme and food waste collection, Hong Kong could have significantly reduced its waste volume in two to three years and ease the pressure for expanding landfills. The multi-prong approach will create jobs that reinvigorate the economy. Construction of incinerators should be put aside as the last resolve.

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26 March 2012

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