

Singapore

Call for new laws to meet 70% recycling target

534 words

29 April 2009

[Straits Times](#)

STIMES

English

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SINGAPORE'S target of recycling 70 per cent of all its waste by 2030 is an achievable one, the chairman of the Sustainable Energy Association here has said.

But new laws will have to be enacted for that extra push towards it, said Mr Edwin Khew, who heads the lobby group of small and medium-sized enterprises interested in green initiatives.

He is also the chief executive of local waste recycling firm IUT Global and a Nominated Member of Parliament.

Mr Khew called for new laws, for instance, to require waste to be separated by type at the source, and for more **food waste** to be recycled.

Of the 570,000 tonnes of **food waste** generated here last year, only 12 per cent was recycled.

He noted that current efforts to promote recycling have skewed it towards construction debris, metal and paper, and that recycling rates were still low for **food waste**, glass and plastics.

The overall rate of recycling - the total amount of waste recycled out of the total amount generated - is now 56 per cent.

The new recycling target of 70 per cent was announced on Monday at the unveiling of the blueprint for building a greener, more energy-efficient and sustainable nation over the next 20 years.

The National Environment Agency (NEA) said it is looking into following the example of Japan, which has laws governing the recycling of **food waste**.

Over the last decade, the push for recycling among consumers has raised the rate from 40 per cent in 2000 to last year's 56 per cent.

Under the National Recycling Programme launched in April 2001, those living in HDB estates are given recycling bags and those living in landed property are given bins, into which can be deposited recyclable paper, plastics, glass, clothing, metal cans and drink cartons.

Waste collectors who make fortnightly visits have been picking up these recyclables. This programme has raised the proportion of participating households from 15 per cent to 63 per cent in eight years.

Recycling has also been made more convenient. More than 3,800 recycling bins dot HDB estates, shopping centres, MRT stations and bus interchanges across the island.

Most residents live no more than 150m from a recycling bin, said the NEA.

Another move taken: urging companies to cut waste by redesigning their product packaging and using recyclable packaging materials.

The latest move in this direction came last week, with the NEA launching its \$8million Reduce, Reuse and Recycle Fund, or the 3R Fund for short. It subsidises up to 80 per cent of the cost of recycling projects by companies for two years, subject to a maximum of \$1 million a project.

Minister for the Environment and Water Resources Yaacob Ibrahim called on the public to also 'take 3R as a way of life - as far as possible reduce, reuse and recycle'.

In other words, people need to get into the habit of cutting back on the waste they generate and of separating their recyclables.

'Singapore is no different from most other countries in having to deal with the environment issue in a more creative way,' he said.