

Review - Tech & Science

Food gobbler turns waste into water

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SINCE it started using a machine that turns **food waste** into water, the Oasis Bay Taiwan Porridge Restaurant in Toa Payoh has cut its waste management bill by 75 per cent.

The restaurant used to pay up to \$1,850 every month to dispose of up to 1,200kg of waste. It now forks out \$450 to get rid of one-tenth the amount.

The machine, called the Bio-Helper, gobbles up **food waste** fast, with the help of special micro-organisms that accelerate the decomposition process. The Toa Payoh restaurant is the only one to use the machine here so far.

There are different models of the machine, which can cost from more than \$1,000 to \$90,000 and can break down 1kg to 500kg of waste at one go. What are left after 24 hours are carbon dioxide and water.

The device, originally from South Korea, was recently brought into Singapore by local waste management firm Helse Enterprise. A few months ago, the firm approached scientists from Singapore Polytechnic's Centre for Biomedical and Life Sciences to customise the product for the local market.

Senior research scientist Puah Chum Mok, who is heading the project, said his team's work is to ensure that the microbes will devour local **food waste** with equal enthusiasm. He is also creating a more aggressive mix of microbes that will break down the waste faster.

Waste management has been earmarked as a key area of research here, as the country faces increasing amounts of waste produced by a growing population. Last year, only 12 per cent of the 570,000 tonnes of **food waste** here was recycled.

Singapore hopes to cash in on the global waste management market projected to grow from US\$230 billion in 2005 to US\$320 billion (S\$464 billion) by 2015.

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