

Question by Miss Cheng Li Hui:

To ask the Minister for the Environment and Water Resources whether NEA will consider imposing a ban on the use of styrofoam packaging in hawker centres in view of its detrimental effects on the environment.

Reply by SMS Dr Amy Khor:

1 The majority of our hawker stalls use reusable crockery. However, disposable wares made of polystyrene foam, commonly known as Styrofoam, are still used by some hawkers to serve food and pack food for takeaway, due to its good thermal insulation and convenience.

2 Polystyrene foam packaging is of concern in some countries where waste is landfilled, as it is non-biodegradable and consequently remains in the landfill for a long time. In Singapore, however, all incinerable waste including polystyrene foam packaging is incinerated safely at waste-to-energy incineration plants, which are fitted with pollution control equipment.

3 Nevertheless, we recognise that there are benefits in switching from polystyrene foam packaging to more environmentally friendly options such as using reusable crockery for dining in and having consumers bring their own containers to pack food for takeaway. The use of reusable crockery also avoids the problem of disposable plates being blown off tables and helps reduce the overall waste volume.

4 My Ministry will continue to look into ways to discourage the use of disposable tableware in hawker centres. However, this would have to be weighed against practical challenges such as the cost of alternatives and greater inconvenience to the hawkers and consumers.
