

SINGAPORE, 3 February 2017 – The Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources (MEWR) has received the report from the Hawker Centre 3.0 Committee ('the Committee').

Hawker Centre 3.0 Committee

2 The Committee was formed in January 2016 to review and make recommendations to the Government on the management of hawker centres and the sustainability of the hawker trade. The vision is for our hawker centres to be appealing and vibrant social spaces where people from all walks of life can enjoy affordable and tasty food in a clean and hygienic environment and where hawkers can continue to make a decent livelihood. Chaired by the Senior Minister of State for the Environment and Water Resources Dr Amy Khor, the 14-member Committee looked into four key areas, namely sustaining the hawker trade, improving productivity in hawker centres, enhancing hawker centres as social spaces, and promoting graciousness.

3 Over the course of 2016, the Committee had received feedback from more than 800 stakeholders, including hawkers, members of public, cleaning contractors, and other industry players.

The Committee's Recommendations

4 The Committee's recommendations under the four key areas are as follows:

On sustaining the hawker trade and supporting new entrants

5 The Committee recommends that the Government develop sustainable, dedicated training programmes that would help facilitate and encourage the entry of aspiring hawkers into the trade. The programmes should involve a pathway in which participants could learn about the hawker trade, acquire culinary and business management skills, as well as have some opportunity to experience being a hawker and eventually becoming one.

6 In view of this, the Committee also recommends that the Government allocate a number of stalls in various hawker centres as incubation stalls for aspiring individuals to experience being a hawker for a limited period of time. These incubation stalls should be fitted with basic equipment to reduce the capital investment required to start a hawker stall, and it would be useful if there are supervisors or mentors to guide and enhance the incubation stall-holder's learning experience and success in mastering the relevant culinary and management skills. The Committee recommends that a panel of supervisors or mentors who may be veteran hawkers be formed to provide coaching and guidance to these aspiring hawkers.

7 The Committee proposes that the Government set up a comprehensive one-stop information centre that would function as a service centre for hawker trade-related enquiries on hawker stall licence application, regulatory requirements, relevant courses and supplier contacts, etc. Apart from guiding new hawkers, the centre should also function as a resource centre for existing hawkers where they could find information on the latest developments and best practices relevant to the hawker trade, such as kitchen equipment and automation, training courses, networks, etc.

8 To make the hawker trade more attractive to our younger generation, the Committee recommends that the Government consider partnering relevant parties to develop suitable promotional programmes to raise the profile of hawkers and the hawker trade. These initiatives could also celebrate and promote hawker centres as a uniquely Singaporean icon. Outstanding hawkers with inspiring stories could be featured through such platforms to raise the profile of the hawker trade and reinforce the hawker culture.

On improving productivity in hawker centres

9 The Committee recommends that the Government continue to explore ways to improve the productivity in hawker centres – both at the centre-level and the stall-level. On the former, the Committee proposes that the Government explore, for instance, the viability of centralised dishwashing, cashless payment and bulk purchasing of common ingredients. Such measures would not only raise productivity, but also address manpower constraints and cut costs, especially over the medium to long term.

10 At the stall-level, the Committee recommends that the Government promote and encourage more widespread adoption of more efficient and productive equipment in the hawkers' operations. This recommendation arises from feedback and suggestions received during the engagement sessions with hawkers – that there is potential to raise hawkers' productivity by automating certain tedious and repetitive tasks, such as cutting chilli, chopping onions, mixing dough, etc. However, it is observed that currently there is very little attempt to automate at the stall-level to ease the hawkers' workload and improve productivity.

On enhancing hawker centres as social spaces and improving the vibrancy of hawker centres

11 The Committee recommends that the National Environment Agency (NEA) and hawker centre operators facilitate regular, organised activities, such as music performances and festive celebrations within hawker centres to enhance the hawker centres' vibrancy and the customers' dining experience. To achieve this goal, the Committee suggests that community groups, such as the grassroots organisations, arts groups, schools or tertiary institutions adopt or partner their preferred hawker centres to hold relevant and regular activities there over a sustained period. This will further strengthen the use of hawker centres as social spaces for communities to come together not just to dine but enjoy and/or participate in community activities.

12 To further enhance the dining experience of the patrons, the Committee recommends that the Government continue to improve the amenities within the hawker centres, such as providing free WIFI access as well as child-friendly spaces.

13 In order to cater to the diverse needs of the population, the Committee is of the view that hawker centres should continue to have a good mix of food. To this end, the Committee recommends that the Government more proactively manage vacant stalls in existing hawker centres which are not managed by third party operators to ensure that a good variety of food is available at these hawker centres.

On promoting graciousness in hawker centres

14 The Committee's engagement sessions with various stakeholders indicate that there was a universal desire for a clean and hygienic dining environment and that most saw tray-return as a desirable social habit that should be cultivated. A good tray-return culture would facilitate faster turnover of tables and reduce waiting time for the next diner and thus, potentially increasing sales for the hawkers. It would also result in a cleaner and more pleasant dining environment. One of the often quoted reasons for not returning trays is the misperception that this would deprive the table-cleaners of their jobs. Yet another common reason cited is that the table-cleaners would remove the tray and crockery even before the patrons could return them to the tray-return station. Hence, to cultivate and entrench a tray-return culture, the Committee recommends that NEA and hawker centre operators work with key stakeholders, such as the cleaning companies to dispel the misperception that the cleaners will be made redundant. The Committee also calls for NEA to conduct more campaigns to propagate the virtue and habit of tray-return and other gracious and considerate behaviour. The Committee also suggests that improvements be made to the current tray-return facilities in terms of design, layout and location of these facilities to make it easier and more convenient for patrons to use and for cleaners to do their work.

15 As hawker centres are community spaces shared by everyone, the Committee is of the view that the Government and other stakeholders should continue to use posters, murals or campaigns to encourage kind and considerate behaviour, such as the sharing of tables and keeping our hawker centres clean by not littering when dining there.

Ministry's response

16 On receiving the Report, Minister for the Environment and Water Resources Mr Masagos Zulkifli said, "I would like to thank the Hawker Centre 3.0 Committee for their hard work over the past year and providing valuable feedback and recommendations to improve our hawker centres. Of course, this report would not be complete without the ideas and suggestions from the various stakeholders, such as our hawkers and members of the public. I also want to thank everyone who contributed their feedback and ideas during the various engagement sessions. We are currently studying the report and will give our response in due course."

17 The report can be accessed [here](#).