



Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang Consumers Association of Penang

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Press Statement / Letter to the Editor

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Crack the Whip on Food Waste

CAP calls on the authorities to come out with urgent solutions to address the enormous food wastage problem that has been dogging the country for many years. Wasting food has direct impacts not only on people locally, but also globally where hundreds of millions of people now have no food to eat every day.

The World Food Programme (WFP) recently warned that as many as 828 million people go to bed hungry every night while the number of those facing acute food insecurity has soared — from 135 million to 345 million — since 2019.

According to the United Nations report, a total of 50 million people in 45 countries are teetering on the edge of famine – some of the world's developing nations, mostly in Africa and Asia, are heading towards mass hunger and starvation.

In Malaysia, it is reported that about 10% of the garbage we throw out every day is food that can still be eaten. Malaysians dumped 4,046 tonnes of edible food daily. This amount can feed 3 million people with 3 meals a day. And it's enough to fill 1½ Olympic-sized swimming pools.

According to landfill operator SWCorp Malaysia, "People in Malaysia generated 17,007 tonnes of food waste per day in 2021. Most (76%) were inedible like bones and fruit skin, while the remaining 24% could still be consumed like leftover meat and vegetables."

It is unjustifiable for so much food to be thrown away at a time of widespread world famine and growing food insecurity. And it's an especially shameful practice at a time when the nation is gripped by high costs of living, with escalating food prices forcing some university students to eat just one meal a day, fast regularly and survive on a loaf of bread for 2 days. In spite of such difficult times, the public at large is throwing away edible food, which is totally unacceptable.

Food wastage also entails high costs of disposal. The cost to dispose of food wasted by each Malaysian household comes to about RM210 a month, or RM2,600 a year.

CAP calls for quick measures and stern action to curtail this unhealthy practice.

The authorities should:

1. Conduct an ongoing nationwide zero-food-waste educational campaign to educate the public and food retailers on food wastage and its implications. This should also be implemented in schools to instil awareness in the young.

2. Introduce regulations to penalise restaurants and eateries that waste food.
3. Establish portion control guidelines for foods served in official public events and private functions.

What the public can do:

1. Don't buy more food than you need, let fruits and vegetables spoil at home, or take larger portions than you can eat.
2. Put leftovers and food waste to good use. Freeze leftovers as an ingredient in another meal. Compost food scraps – this gives nutrients back to the soil and reduces your carbon footprint.
3. Don't throw away oddly-shaped or bruised fruits and vegetables, find ways to use them (eg: for juices and desserts).
4. Donate or share foods that are in excess.
5. Store food wisely to prevent spoilage.
6. Take smaller portions at home and share large dishes when eating out.

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