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Green Power Urges for a Mid-Autumn Festival with Zero Food Waste

Environmental group **Green Power** finds that there is a severe food waste problem during the celebration of the Mid-Autumn Festival. This includes discarded moon cakes and excess food from Mid-Autumn Festival family reunion dinners. Excess food not only wastes resources, but also exacerbates food waste problems. Currently, food waste takes up a third of all Hong Kong Municipal Solid Waste, and there is no local household food waste recycling system. Green power appeals for people to celebrate a greener and more sustainable Mid-Autumn Festival, through reducing food waste.

Today, **Green Power** released the results of the latest survey on “Consumption and Celebration Habits during Mid-Autumn Festival”. This revealed ongoing problems with waste arising from celebrating the Mid-Autumn Festival. The survey found that over 70% of respondents’ families had on average one dish of leftovers from their previous Mid-Autumn family reunion dinner; most leftovers were staples such as rice and noodles, as well as meat.

The food waste problem is especially severe for mooncakes. According to the survey, after the previous Mid-Autumn Festival Hong Kongers discarded some 2.51 million mooncakes, the highest total since 2010. If arrayed in a line, these could stretch for the total length of the Hong Kong rail network.

On the other hand, the survey also found that up to 90% of the respondents indicated willingness to participate in household food waste recycling.

Dr Cheng Luk Ki, Division Head of Scientific Research and Conservation of Green Power, reminds people to take some care with the numbers of mooncakes they receive and buy this year. Also, with over 50% respondents saying that the mooncakes were discarded because of deterioration, he suggested that people avoid giving snowy mooncakes with shorter shelf lives. In addition, instead of giving mooncakes, gifts could be foods with longer shelf lives such as dried mushrooms or dried scallops; or people might spend more quality time celebrating the festival with family members, especially older people who live alone.

Last year, some 70% of respondents had leftovers from family reunion dinners, this marks a 20% increase compared to 2010; most leftovers were staples such as rice and noodles, followed by meat, and vegetables. **Dr Cheng** advised people to prepare this year's Mid-Autumn Festival family reunion dinner with less rice, noodles etc, and instead prepare more vegetables to have a wider and richer variety of food, whilst reducing waste.

Dr Cheng welcomes the fact that most respondents are willing to undertake household waste recycling, but he reminds the public that since there is no household food waste recycling system in Hong Kong, most leftovers will be sent to landfills. "At present, food waste accounts for a third of all Hong Kong Municipal Solid Waste. Although the government is planning to build an organic resources recycling centre, this cannot become operational until 2015 at the earliest, and will only handle a small amount of food waste. So it's vital for the public to reducing the amounts of food prepared." said **Dr Cheng**.

The survey results will be released today during the 20th "Clean Up the World in Hong Kong" event, organised by **Green Power** for the 17th consecutive year with sponsorship from **Power Assets Holdings Limited**. Officiating are: **Mrs Regina Leung, Wife of the Chief Executive; Mr Benny Wong Yiu-kam, Deputy Director of Environmental Protection; Teachers from Pui Ching Primary School; Mr Yee Tak-chow, HK Electric General Manager (Corporate Development), and Dr Eric Tsang Po Keung, Chairman of Green Power**. Guests attending the ceremony will share their tips on celebrating a "Green and Healthy Mid-Autumn Festival".

Mr Yee Tak-chow, HK Electric General Manager (Corporate Development) advises people to implement good food storage practices to reduce waste. For example, put raw food in the refrigerator as soon as possible; dried food that attracts moisture should be stored in sealed containers; and people should avoid buying too much perishable food. "With appropriate food preservation, food remains edible for longer, in turn reducing waste created through food becoming spoiled," said **Mr Yee**.

Mr. Lee Wing Wai, Pui Ching Primary School teacher, suggested that people give away excessive mooncakes to those in need before they expire. He noted that his school has held mooncakes giveaway activities. During last year's Mid-Autumn Festival, hundreds of mooncakes were recovered from students' families and presented to a Food Bank.

Mrs Regina Leung, Wife of the Chief Executive, suggested that people take home leftovers from Mid-Autumn Festival family reunion dinners. “Bring a food box when out for family reunion dinners, so you can bring back leftovers, reducing waste,” she said.

Mr. Benny Wong Yiu-kam, JP, Deputy Director of Environmental Protection Department, advised people to gauge their appetite, not to prepare and buy too much food – even though there will be a lot of food on sale or special offers. **Dr Eric Tsang Po Keung, Chairman of Green Power**, also advises the public to calculate the number of mooncakes they need before purchasing. To avoid over purchasing, they should subtract the estimated number of mooncakes that will be received by the required number of mooncakes.

In addition, the assembly also launched “Zero Food Waste Online Education Kit” – free to download teaching materials for different levels, written to match up with the teacher’s teaching.

Mrs Leung, will hand out the props of the “Zero Food Waste Online Education Kit” to students of Hong Kong Pui Ching Primary School, symbolising that the teaching materials are available for free download starting from today.

Today’s event also saw the launch of “Five Steps to Mid-Autumn Zero Food Waste” to provide citizens with 5 simple and easy to implement tips on achieving zero food waste during the Mid-Autumn Festival period. People who make an online commitment to the “Five Steps to Mid-Autumn Zero Food Waste” will have an opportunity to obtain a free set of eco-friendly cutlery.

“Five Steps to Mid-Autumn Zero Food Waste” commitment to action officially starts after the ceremony held today. Furthermore, Power Assets Volunteers and Pui Ching Primary School students and teachers who attend the ceremony can instantly encourage the passer-bys in Causeway Bay to committing in practicing “Five Steps to Mid-Autumn Zero Food Waste” after the ceremony. They could also help distribute eco-friendly cutlery that has the words “Five Steps to Mid-Autumn Zero Food Waste” on it, encouraging the public to have a green Mid-Autumn Festival.

“Clean Up the World” is an international activity organised by the United Nations. This annual event is now held in more than 120 cities around the globe, with more than 35 million people participating, and Green Power is the official organiser in Hong Kong. Since 2004, the



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theme has been “Reducing Festival Waste and Enjoying a Green Festival”, encouraging the public to minimise waste and harm to the environment and the Earth while celebrating a greener festival. A “Green Festival” website has been established to provide information and tips on festival waste reduction.

This year, the main theme is “Zero Mid-Autumn Food Waste”, encouraging the public to pay attention to the problem of food wastage problem, and take steps to achieve zero food waste. Activities include organizing " Five Steps to Mid-Autumn Zero Food Waste” commitment to action, and launching the “Zero Food Waste Online Education Kit”.

“Five Steps to Mid-Autumn Zero Food Waste” commitment to action and “Zero Food Waste Online Education Kit”: www.greenpower.org.hk/cuw (webpage includes different ways of protecting the environment while celebrating different festivals).

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