



IKEA to do away with disposable shopping bags

Singapore, January 17, 2013 – Home furnishing retailer, IKEA, is today announcing that it will stop selling disposable plastic bags from March 23, 2013. Customers are encouraged to bring their own bags when they shop at the stores, alternatively they can purchase the blue reusable IKEA shopping bags.

To encourage customers to make the switch, IKEA is reducing the price of its blue reusable bags from \$1.20 to \$0.90 for large bags and from \$0.60 to \$0.30 for the smaller version.

Mr Christian Rojkjaer, Managing Director of Ikano Retail Asia, said, "This initiative is the next natural step for us to further reduce the use and consumption of disposable plastic bags in Singapore and at the same time support change in people's everyday behavior for a positive sustainable impact on the environment."

IKEA first announced six years ago that disposable plastic bags would be chargeable. As a show of its commitment, the company donated proceeds from the sales of plastic bags to fund eco-education programs by World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF). Since then, it has donated close to S\$550,000 to support conservation programmes. These funds were raised from 18 million pieces of plastic bags saved during the period.

From 2013, with the cost savings from eliminating disposable plastic bags, IKEA Singapore is pledging a further \$200,000 to WWF Singapore to fund its eco-education programmes.

IKEA has also received support and encouragement from other environmental partners (World Wide Fund for Nature, Singapore Environment Council & South-West CDC) for their move to encourage a reduction of plastic bag usage. Singapore Environment Council's Executive Director, Mr Jose Raymond said, "It comes as no big surprise to the SEC that it is IKEA Singapore that has taken this bold move to completely stop supplying plastic bags to customers. After all, IKEA was the first retailer to charge for plastic bags back in 2007 in the absence of any legislation. The move will serve as an impetus for other retailers to evaluate how their own operations can be further improved. Business sustainability and environmental sustainability are not mutually exclusive; rather, they go hand-in-hand."

"The SEC fully supports the concept of the 3Rs and when it comes to consumer packaging such as plastic bags, reduction is always better than reusing or recycling; in the same way that 'prevention is better than cure'. SEC has campaigned for years for plastic bag reduction and we applaud IKEA's spectacular announcement as being the way forward," Mr Raymond added.

About 2.5 billion plastic shopping bags are used every year which amounts to 2500 bags per family per year or seven bags a day. If each family uses one less, Singapore could save 50 million bags each year.

Mr Christian Rojkjaer added, "We are very encouraged that we have such a broad cross section of endorsers from the Singapore public and private sectors supporting the initiative. We have already seen examples that many people in Singapore already are ready or actually doing their part in making a sustainable difference. The broad and willing acceptance and support from our customers when we started charging for plastic bags in 2007 is an affirmation for our belief that the people living in Singapore act rational and are reasonable, mature and sensible and they should get more credit for it."

Another advocate for sustainable living, Mayor Dr Amy Khor, South West CDC said, "South West CDC is committed to promoting green habits among our residents through the 3Rs of reduce, reuse and recycle in order to conserve our environment and to help mitigate climate change. Hence, we support IKEA's efforts in phasing out disposable plastic bags in their retail stores by encouraging their customers to opt for reusable bags to promote environmental awareness and a green lifestyle. The CDC will continue to work with like-minded partners such as IKEA to promote green living amongst our residents as part of the district's sustainability master plan."

Also supporting IKEA's initiative is its long-term partner, World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF). CEO Ms Elaine Tan said, "WWF Singapore is grateful and honoured for IKEA's generous support over the past six years. We share a common vision of reducing Singapore's ecological footprint, in support of an environmentally sustainable future. IKEA's action to phase out disposable plastic bags reaffirms its commitment to environmental conservation. Its strong support for WWF Singapore's eco-education programmes will go a long way towards building a generation of consumers empowered to make informed and responsible choices."

The IKEA vision is to create a better every day for the many people and a better life includes living more sustainably. Some of the company's sustainability efforts include recycling waste oil from the store's restaurant into bio-diesel through a process called trans esterification. The bio-diesel produced can be used pure or blended with diesel, and is available locally for vehicles in Singapore. Customers are also encouraged to bring back any additional Allen Keys they have in their home to the stores. The Allen Keys are then sent off for recycling. IKEA Singapore's kids club, småles, has activities that encourages and educates its members on sustainable living, one of which is to bring old newspapers to the stores in exchange for the the club's currency – similar to a bonus point system, and use it to buy the club's merchandise. The collected newspapers are used at the store's packing counters for customers purchases.

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About IKEA

Home is the most important place in the world. A personal space and comforting spot where family and friends gather, where children learn and grow. A place where everyone is welcome to just hang out, everyday. IKEA aims to help create a better everyday life at home for the many people.

Since its 1943 founding in Sweden, IKEA has offered a wide range of well-designed home furnishings and functional living solutions at prices so low that many people can afford them. IKEA believes that showing responsibility for people and the environment is a condition for doing good business. This means that IKEA's low prices must not be at the expense of people or the environment – low price but not at any price. IKEA incorporates environmentally friendly efforts into its day-to-day business and continuously supports initiatives benefitting causes such as children and the environment. Read about IKEA's sustainability efforts at www.IKEA.com.sg/sustainability. To date, there are more than 321 IKEA stores in 39 countries, including two in Singapore.

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