



Photograph Credit: Helga Vanthournout. Full press materials [here](#).

## **As Hong Kong drowns in takeout packaging waste, new research identifies a path forward**

**December 7<sup>th</sup>, 2021:** Hong Kong is drowning in packaging waste from takeout meals and drinks according to research released today by ADM Capital Foundation (ADMCF).

The research documented in the report [‘Eat Without Waste — Hong Kong’s Takeout Packaging Challenge’](#) estimates 3.9 billion single-use takeout items were used and discarded in 2019, even before Hong Kong’s takeout habits further intensified with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Hong Kong’s prolific use of single-use foodservice packaging (SFP) for takeout is driven by a culture of convenience and severe space restrictions in a densely-packed city. This packaging, which is wastefully sent to landfill, is also responsible for much of the litter in our country parts and across our beaches.

Following the introduction of restrictions on eateries and quarantine requirements in response to the pandemic, local hospitality groups and delivery platforms experienced up to 50% more takeout orders, a trend predicted to last beyond the pandemic, driving volumes of takeout packaging waste to grow further.

The research details the complexities of addressing the problem, the urgent need to use a portfolio of tools, and the importance of broadening the discussion beyond plastic takeout packaging.

“Addressing just one type of single-use food packaging, such as plastic, would inevitably cause a shift to other SFPs and would not contribute to Hong Kong’s landfill diversion or litter reduction goals,” said Helga Vanthournout, author of the report.

A suite of potential solutions based upon circular economy principles — Recycling, Bring-Your-Own (BYO), Composting, and loaned Reuse systems — were evaluated for their full potential to divert SFP from landfill. Costs, effort to implement the solutions and environmental impacts were assessed.

Of these four solution types assessed, Recycling and BYO showed the most promise. Both were identified as applicable and accessible to a large segment of the Hong Kong market and have the potential to keep the largest amount of SFP out of landfills with relatively minimal water usage and carbon emissions.

“Contrary to popular belief, plant-based and compostable packaging will still end up in Hong Kong’s landfills,” said Ashley Bang of ADM Capital Foundation, who led the analysis. “Our market currently lacks the industrial infrastructure to compost this type of packaging, so F&B operators and consumers should be aware of the actual impact of what they perceive as more sustainable options.”

Recognising that all solutions require collaboration, commitment and effort from multiple parties, the report encourages the hospitality industry to lead by example rather than wait for policy change. “F&B operators can nudge consumers towards better takeout options, accommodate reusable containers, and inform themselves about the impact of single-use packaging options,” said Vanthournout.

The report notes that government intervention is a must, since today, no environmentally beneficial solution can fully compete with SFP usage in terms of cost and convenience. It also highlights the need for consumers and households to collectively instigate a societal shift away from disposal and landfills.

“We should not wait for a hard-hitting piece of legislation that will take time to build consensus around,” said Vanthournout. “The work to keep takeout packaging waste out of landfills must and can start today,” she said.

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