

GREEN PRODUCTS

From corn plates to worm farms ...

More businesses paving way for consumers to make eco-friendly choices

NEO CHAI CHIN
and LIN YAN QIN

chaichin@mediacorp.com.sg

THE next time you hold a barbecue or party, try going styrofoam and plastic-free.

Look out for a new range of disposable plates, cups and cutlery made from corn and yam, that could be on some supermarket shelves by the month's end.

CornWare, which can be popped into the microwave and is designed to decompose after 102 days, is brought in by local company OliveGreen.

For a start, it will be sold at FairPrice Finest at Bukit Timah Plaza and Thomson; FairPrice at AMK Hub and Hougang Point; Mustafa Centre; Carrefour (Suntec City) and MeidiYa. Negotiations with other supermarkets are in progress, said OliveGreen director Aloysius Cheong.

The firm is not alone — more businesses in Singapore are making “green” material and technology available to consumers and companies.

Worm farm importer GreenBack, for one, plans to get more Singaporeans to use the creepy crawlies to recycle food waste and generate compost. More than 300 visitors to the recent Singapore Garden Festival expressed interest in having their own worm farms, TODAY had reported.

Then there is Energenics, which regenerates scrapped lead acid batteries for more than 50 firms in Singapore, including PSA, and is now looking to market a cleaner brand of diesel to transport providers and companies here.

The fuel, dubbed Enerdiesel, contains ethanol and diesel stabilised by a patented additive. It is already used by more than 3,000 buses in Bangalore, India, said Energenics' director Mr Ronen Hazarika.

Enerdiesel produces half the number of particulates and up to 23 per cent less carbon monoxide than normal diesel.

As green products such as these seek a firmer foothold in the mass market, consumers told TODAY these would really

take off if priced cheaper than other alternatives.

The price of CornWare's spoons, forks and other tableware — all bearing the Singapore Environment Council's (SEC) “Green Label” mark — start from \$1.40, up to \$4.70 for a pack of 20 nine-inch plastic plates.

A similar pack of 10 coloured, regular plastic plates costs \$2.80 at FairPrice online.

Mr Cheong said he felt the local market was now more receptive to green products. According to catering company Smiling Orchid's director, Ms Meilyn Choo-Jaimon, however: “Caterers have a lot of problems passing costs on to clients, though about 10 per cent of our customers — all corporates — specifically ask for recyclable materials to be used at their functions, and are will to pay \$1 to \$2 more per person for it.”

For customers who eventually adopt Enerdiesel, Mr Hazarika said, Energenics will install a blending unit to existing refuelling stations, free.

And companies that use regenerated batteries, which would otherwise be discarded, can halve their costs. Energenics collects and delivers the batteries for free. Over the last 18 months, 100 tonnes of old batteries destined for the scrapyards had been given new life, said Energenics' business development manager Mr Teow Sing Teng.

The SEC has seen burgeoning interest from companies keen to offer green products, said its general manager Yatin Premchand. There were 500 Green Label products last year; now, there are 900.

“I think the (message from) campaigns about climate change and the environmental impact of our actions is getting out there,” said Mr Premchand.

And while companies manufacturing green products are often niche firms, they could have significant impact as a collective.

“Maybe their products don't have as big a presence as the big companies, but as a group they offer a greener choice and variety for consumers,” he said. “It's important to have that so that consumers can choose.”

>> CLEARER SKIES
AHEAD FOR
CARBON TRADING 6