The 128-year-old The Hong Kong Electric Co., Ltd. (HK Electric) is one of Hong Kong’s two electricity suppliers. It provides electricity for more than 570,000 commercial and residential customers on Hong Kong Island and Lamma Island. In response to the Government’s call on reducing food waste, HK Electric started to install food-waste processors at the staff canteens in 2013. Besides, various kinds of activities have been organized to raise staff awareness in cherishing food. The measures were proved to be effective as the weight of food waste generated by the staff canteens has dropped by more than 60% over the past five years.

HK Electric has three staff canteens located at three premises: Lamma Power Station, Electric Tower at Ap Lei Chau and its Head Office at Admiralty where daily sales in 2017 were around 850 meals in total. Measuring the weight of food waste was the first task set by HK Electric when they signed the Food Wise Charter 5 years ago. HK Electric arranges with its staff canteen caterers to weight food waste daily before putting them into the food-waste processors, as it is the utmost essential duty to track the number accurately for evaluating the effectiveness of its Food Wise activities.

The three staff canteens discarded 90 kg per day of food waste in total before the Company started promoting Food Wise culture in 2013. With a similar amount of sales, the number has been reducing in the past five years and in 2017 the weight of food waste dropped by more than a half, to below 40 kg per day. Among the three staff canteens, Head Office stood out as the figure plunged over 70% during the same period.

When stepping into the staff canteen, a long table is seen at a corner named ‘Food Waste Separation Counter’. It is a corner for collecting food waste where diners are asked to do the sorting work themselves according to the instruction placed nearby. Plastic trays with screening-baskets on top
are set on the table, making it convenient for diners to separate leftovers into different categories.

‘It is always difficult to get things started’, and there is no exception in this case. “Some of our colleagues may think it’s dirty, while some may think it’s unnecessary. Luckily, our management has taken the lead and then others follow. When everyone initiates to separate their leftovers, they would realize the embarrassment in between the amount you need to put into the tray and the others. As a result and when necessary, they would take the initiative to ask for less when ordering.” HK Electric shared the unexpected outcome of setting up the ‘Food Waste Separation Counter’.

Food trimmings will also be produced during food preparation. Yet, HK Electric has shown how valuable food trimmings can be. An ‘Eco Enzyme’ workshop was held last year during lunchtime at the staff canteen. During the workshop, the hosts demonstrated the process of making the enzyme and distributed pre-made enzyme to participants for trial. ‘Eco Enzyme’ is an eco-friendly cleanser which is produced by fermentation of fresh kitchen waste such as fruit and vegetable dregs, water and sugar. Leaving the liquid for three months, it will then become a multipurpose cleanser.

Furthermore, there is a Recipe Sharing section on the Company’s intranet portal where recipes that are specially designed to make good use of food trimmings can be found. “We have received emails from staff, saying that their wives wish to know more about this cooking style. And we have received similar creative recipes from staff too!”

In view of the popularity of low-carbon recipes, HK Electric organized an internal Low-carbon Recipe Contest earlier this year. Using ingredients with fewer trimmings to cook was only one of the essential requirements to win the contest. The recipes should also be of...
Sharing of Success Experience  
The Hongkong Electric Co., Ltd.

low-carbon consumption and most importantly, be a delicious dish. The winning recipe was one of the meal choices at the staff canteen on the World Environment Day.

Except those interesting activities mentioned above, there is still a trick to reduce food waste from the source. HK Electric launched a ‘-$1’ promotion in 2016, which any staff pre-order their lunch a day before will enjoy $1 deduction. The proportion of pre-ordered meals usually consists of 10% of regular sales, but the promotion has helped reduce over 20% food trimmings when compared to last year. Though $1 seems to be a small amount, the little step does help chefs predict how many ingredients are needed. Therefore, the Company will continue to promote and encourage their staff to reserve meals.

Improving employees’ environmental awareness is one of the reasons why HK Electric arranged various Food Wise activities and it is one of the guidelines under the Company’s environmental policy. “The Government is going to launch the Municipal Solid Waste Charging Scheme. We hope that through this Food Wise program, we can imperceptibly influence our staff to implement the reduction-at-source principle and understand its importance.” Lastly, monitoring the amount of food waste and coordinating promotional activities will be carried on, so that staff at HK Electric could help improve the food waste issue in Hong Kong by sharing the idea of Food Wise with their friends and families.

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