

Local Corporate's Effort in Driving Circular Economy: Coffee Grounds Upcycling Program



Hong Kong's vibrant coffee culture thrives with numerous coffee shops across the city, generating a significant amount of used coffee grounds daily from freshly brewed beverages. In recent years, some organisations have begun turning what was once considered waste—used coffee grounds—into various valuable resources. As a signee of the Food Wise Charter, DFI Retail Group has demonstrated its commitment to food waste reduction by pioneering innovative solutions, thereby promoting sustainability.

In 2024, 7-Eleven, a convenience store chain with an extensive retail network in Hong Kong and part of DFI Retail Group, launched the 'Grounds to Green' Coffee Grounds Upcycling Program – converting 7CAFÉ coffee grounds into natural fertiliser to grow fresh vegetables. The produce is donated to local charities such as Pei Ho Counterparts, where it is transformed into hot meals for people in need. Building on this success, phase two saw 7-Eleven partner with the Maxim's Group to upcycle surplus bread and coffee grounds into a canned craft beer named BOB (Bottle of Bread), brewed at a local craft brewery. This initiative raises public awareness of food-waste reduction and coffee-grounds recycling.

After more than a year of implementation, 7-Eleven launched the third phase of the initiative in September 2025. Phase three has fully driven the 'Farm to Table' cross-sector collaboration: in partnership with Foodlink Foundation and local social enterprise New Life Farm, 7CAFÉ coffee grounds are turned into fertiliser to cultivate fresh, seasonal vegetables at New Life Farm; these vegetables are then crafted into two new 7-SELECT juices – Cucumber Kiwifruit Apple and Beetroot Apple – further advancing resource circularity.

As Hong Kong's only farm-based vocational rehabilitation service centre, New Life Farm provides agricultural rehabilitation training for people in recovery from mental illness, helping them regain confidence, reintegrate into society and become more self-reliant. This cross-sector collaboration demonstrates the feasibility of resource circulation while encouraging the public to adopt low-carbon, healthy, and sustainable lifestyles.

“‘Farm to Table’ harnesses the power of upcycling to promote low-carbon, healthy eating,” said Mr Patrick Lui, Managing Director, 7-Eleven Hong Kong & Macau. “7-Eleven has long championed upcycling coffee grounds. The first two phases of ‘Grounds to Green’ received strong support and delivered a positive sustainability impact. In phase three, we are taking ‘Farm to Table’ further with local social enterprise New Life Farm and Foodlink Foundation – using coffee grounds to grow seasonal crops that become ingredients in 7-Eleven own-brand products, giving customers a wider range of planet-friendlier choices. This initiative embeds sustainability and corporate social responsibility, reflecting 7-Eleven’s commitment to the environment and society. Looking ahead, we will continue to explore the limitless possibilities of green circularity and open a new chapter in the circular economy.”

Ms Chris Wong, Head of Professional Services, (Vocational Rehabilitation, Employment Services and Autism Spectrum Disorder Services), New Life Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association (NLPRA), said: “We’re delighted to collaborate with 7-Eleven – it’s an important breakthrough for New Life Farm. 7-Eleven’s strong commitment to sustainability is inspiring. By turning coffee grounds into organic crops, this project gives people in recovery a rare chance to see their harvest transformed into new products for the market – a tremendous sense of achievement. I hope this is just the beginning, with more opportunities to co-create new products with 7-Eleven so even more people can enjoy the results of our partnership.”

Ms Aurea Yung, Head of Operations at Foodlink Foundation, said: “We’re delighted to leverage Foodlink’s network to further support 7-Eleven’s ‘Grounds to Green’ Coffee Grounds Upcycling Program. Phases one and two received very positive feedback, and phase three strengthens sustainability while extending its impact into community mental health in partnership with New Life Farm. It’s an innovative and meaningful programme. We look forward to continuing to work hand in hand with 7-Eleven to drive sustainability across multiple areas!”

These innovative initiatives exemplify the transformative potential on how reducing food waste can drive a circular economy. By upcycling coffee grounds and surplus bread, they have not only reduced waste but also supported local communities, and promoted environmental consciousness. Prof. Wong Ka-Wo, convenor of Subcommittee on Promotion for Food Wise Initiatives, acknowledges the success of the 'Grounds to Green' Program underscores the importance of cross-sector collaboration in achieving resource circularity. He encourages the trade to embrace innovative surplus food / byproduct upcycling practices to contribute to a greener Hong Kong.