

Building Sustainability with Oysters: A Case of the Great Eagle Group



Source: Unsplash (2024)

Background

Hong Kong people consume three times more seafood than the global average, with more than 3,300 tonnes of oysters imported to the city in 2023 (SCMP, 2024). However, this puts heavy pressure on local landfills, as the bulky shells of oysters cannot be processed by food-waste recycling facilities. Organic waste, which includes discarded oyster shells, is the largest contributor to municipal solid waste and accounts for around 7% of the city's greenhouse gas emissions every year (SCMP, 2024).

The Great Eagle Group, parent company of Eaton HK and The Langham, is a well-established corporation that values sustainability as much as the development of the group (Great Eagle Holdings Limited, n.d.). In partnership with Green Island Cement, the group launched the world's first Oyster Shell Upcycling Programme in March 2023 (The Great Eagle Group, 2024). The programme aims to repurpose discarded oyster shells into an alternative and sustainable raw material for cement production (The Great Eagle Group, 2024).

Oyster shells contain 91% limestone—a key ingredient for cement that is traditionally sourced through a carbon-intensive mining process (SCMP, 2024). By using discarded shells collected from hotel restaurants, the cement manufacturer is able to produce cement in a more sustainable way. Since the launch of the programme, about nine tonnes of oyster shells upcycled from Eaton HK and The Langham have been successfully converted into sustainable building materials (The Great Eagle Group, 2024). The project has effectively reduced waste heading to landfills, while also alleviating the huge demand for cement (SCMP, 2024).

Challenges

However, given the cost and extra labour required to clean the oyster shells for recycling, the idea has pushed many businesses away, including the Great Eagle Group 20 years ago (SCMP, 2024). Moreover, securing sufficient storage space and arranging transport for the oyster shells

present logistical challenges for participating businesses. In addition, to maximize effectiveness, the project requires a certain level of awareness and active participation from employees. It is also believed that only if the public becomes aware of upcycling will the project grow and attract more businesses to participate.

Discussion Questions

1. Why do Hong Kong people consume more seafood than the global average?
2. What are the potential benefits for hotels to incorporate oyster shell upcycling like Eaton HK and The Langham?
3. How do discarded oyster shells contribute to greenhouse gas emissions?
4. What strategies could be implemented to make the cleaning and logistics of oyster shells upcycling more cost-effective and efficient?
5. In what ways can public awareness and employee participation be increased to support the success of the Oyster Shell Upcycling Programme?

References

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Keywords

- Food and Beverage
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- Public awareness