

Singapore forum aims for Asia's first zero-waste, zero-emission meet



Participants at this year's Responsible Business Forum will wear badges made from recycled banana fibre. PHOTO: GLOBAL INITIATIVES

A business forum in Singapore next week aims to be Asia's first large-scale "zero-waste" and "zero-emission" conference.

In a nutshell, that means the event will be as ecologically sustainable as possible by avoiding wasteful processes and products.

So printed programmes and business cards are out, to be replaced by a mobile app that is integrated with LinkedIn and social media, and includes live question and answer sessions. Digital signage will replace printed logos and banners.

Participants will use digital tickets instead of printed ones and wear badges made from recycled banana fibre at the event – the Responsible Business Forum (RBF) on Sustainable Development.

The conference at Marina Bay Sands from Nov 22 to 24 will also run on a locally sourced, meatless menu. Any leftover food will go to the onsite food waste digesters.

More notably, carbon emissions from more than 200 international flights to and from Singapore that are related to the event will be fully offset by RBF. This will be done by getting its climate partner, South Pole Group, to invest in a landfill gas capture project in China and a starch wastewater treatment facility in Thailand.

RBF estimates it will offset 320 tonnes of carbon dioxide generated by transport and energy use this year, against the 207 tonnes of carbon dioxide generated last year.

“Large-scale conferences tend to be highly resource-intensive with major sources of greenhouse gas emissions, pollution and waste for the host city and residents,” said event organiser Global Initiatives in a statement today.

The move, it added, underpins the forum’s “commitment to a sustainable economy, not only with the issues addressed in the programme but also in the logistics of putting the event together”.

“Everything has been minutely reviewed, from food to napkins to stage-set decorations, in order to raise bar exponentially this year to minimise the waste and footprint during the event, and whenever possible, to reduce its carbon footprint and overall environmental impact.”

The event is expected to be attended by more than 600 global business, government and non-governmental organisation leaders.

It will be audited on all its sustainability efforts and certified by the Singapore Association of Convention and Exhibition Organisers and Suppliers.

“The core of RBF’s mandate is to incite businesses and government to join hands for the much-needed acceleration in the sustainability conversation globally,” Global Initiatives chief executive Tony Gourlaay told The Straits Times.

“As we engage the business community here at RBF to break new ground on their existing sustainability commitments, we need to walk the talk ourselves in running the event,” he said, noting that the measures undertaken this year will also lead to a 10 per cent reduction in costs from last year’s budget.

“We also want to get everyone thinking about how much each single plastic cup, plane ride, conference badge actually impacts the Earth.”

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