

Singapore to implement beverage container return scheme from April 2026

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In a major step towards sustainability, Singapore will roll out its Beverage Container Return Scheme from April 1, 2026, aiming to increase recycling rates and reduce waste. The initiative, spearheaded by the National Environment Agency (NEA) and managed by Beverage Container Return Scheme Ltd. (BCRS Ltd.), will be fully implemented by July 1, 2026.

Under this scheme, consumers will pay a 10-cent refundable deposit when purchasing pre-packaged beverages in plastic or metal containers ranging from 150 millilitres to 3 litres. The deposit can be reclaimed by returning empty containers at designated return points, including reverse vending machines strategically placed across the island. Larger supermarkets with a floor area exceeding 200m² will also be mandated to set up return points to ensure accessibility and convenience.

Driving industry and consumer participation

BCRS Ltd., a not-for-profit organisation established by major beverage producers such as Coca-Cola Singapore Beverages Pte. Ltd., F&N Foods Pte. Ltd., and Pokka Pte. Ltd., will oversee the collection, sorting, and recycling of beverage containers. Beverage producers will be required to register with BCRS Ltd. and contribute fees based on the number of containers placed on the market. These fees will fund the logistics and operational aspects of the recycling process.

To facilitate a smooth transition, businesses will have a three-month grace period from April 1 to June 30, 2026, to clear old stock that does not carry the deposit mark and is ineligible for refunds. This measure ensures that retailers and consumers can adapt to the new system without disruption.

Enhancing recycling infrastructure and awareness

The scheme's success hinges on an efficient recycling infrastructure. BCRS Ltd. plans to establish over 1,000 return points across Singapore, targeting an ambitious 80 per cent return rate within three years. In addition, the organisation will implement fair and transparent fee structures for industry stakeholders and secure necessary capital reserves to maintain smooth operations.

Public education will be a critical component of the initiative. The NEA and BCRS Ltd. will launch outreach programs and campaigns to educate consumers and businesses about the scheme's benefits and procedures. More details on return point locations and public engagement events will be announced as the launch date approaches.

Aligning with national sustainability goals

The Beverage Container Return Scheme is part of Singapore's broader environmental strategy, which focuses on waste reduction, lowering carbon emissions, and extending the lifespan of Semakau Landfill. By encouraging recycling and fostering a circular economy, the scheme is expected to impact Singapore's sustainability efforts significantly.

With ample time for businesses and consumers to prepare, Singapore is positioning itself as a leader in sustainable waste management. The success of this initiative could pave the way for similar schemes in other sectors, reinforcing the nation's commitment to a greener future.

The Beverage Container Return Scheme represents a major milestone in Singapore's sustainability journey, aligning with national goals to reduce waste and extend the lifespan of Semakau Landfill. The initiative is poised for success with strong industry participation, public education efforts, and a well-planned infrastructure. As Singapore moves towards an 80 per cent return rate, this scheme could set a precedent for future sustainability initiatives, solidifying the nation's role as a leader in eco-friendly waste management.