



Shanghai fair serves as springboard for Singapore firms

A Singapore biotech company wants to help China improve sanitation at tourist sites with its bio-toilets that can turn waste into fertiliser in 24 hours.

Westcom Technology also aims to bring its food waste machines, used by town councils, hospitals and schools in Singapore, to the Chinese market of nearly 1.4 billion people.

It is one of the more than 80 Singapore companies taking part in the inaugural China International Import Expo, which begins tomorrow.

"We want to bring in products that fit into what China wants to do in terms of protecting the ecosystem, toilet revolution and waste recycling," said Westcom Technology chief executive David Tan.

"The authorities have problems finding suitable locations to build toilets and the infrastructure is not ready. They are commercialising faster than (they can build) the basic infrastructure," he added.

Three years ago, Chinese President Xi Jinping declared war on poorly maintained public toilets in a campaign dubbed "toilet revolution". This triggered efforts to build or renovate some 68,000 toilets at tourist sites at a cost of more than 20 billion yuan (\$4 billion).

The government aims to add another 47,000 toilets and renovate 17,000 by 2020.

Said Mr Tan: "Our bio-toilets don't need water, electricity and complicated piping."

Each set of bio-toilet costs \$2,000. It has not been sold commercially anywhere yet but Mr Tan has been approached by a local company to build a prototype for a tourist site in Guangxi autonomous region. He has also received inquiries from cleaning companies and operators managing rest areas along highways.

Westcom, set up in 2015, plans to open a branch office in Shanghai.

"We are looking at potential projects in Inner Mongolia and Beijing," Mr Tan added.

Another company hoping to use the trade fair as a springboard to the Chinese market is KinderWorld International Group, a private school that has 15 campuses in Vietnam catering to children from 18 months old to 18 years old. It aims to enter the Chinese market via cities such as Chongqing, Chengdu, Kunming and Nanning.

"We hope that this event will enable us to explore our expansion into China through organic growth or through collaboration opportunities with potential partners from China," said Dr Thomas Chong, chief communications officer of KinderWorld, in an e-mail reply.

Not all Singapore companies at the trade fair are new to China.

Mei Heong Yuen, a food company that has been in China for 23 years, has signed up for two booths to promote its range of imported soya sauce, health drinks and candies.

"Shanghai... attracts a diverse group of customers from different parts of China," said executive director James Lee.

"Besides, President Xi Jinping is attending the fair. This will help give our products a higher profile," he added.

The China International Import Expo, which starts tomorrow, will showcase the products and services of more than 80 Singapore firms. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

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