

# From drink packs to green roofs

The humble beverage carton can be turned into so much more to save the environment, writes **Aneeta Sundararaj**

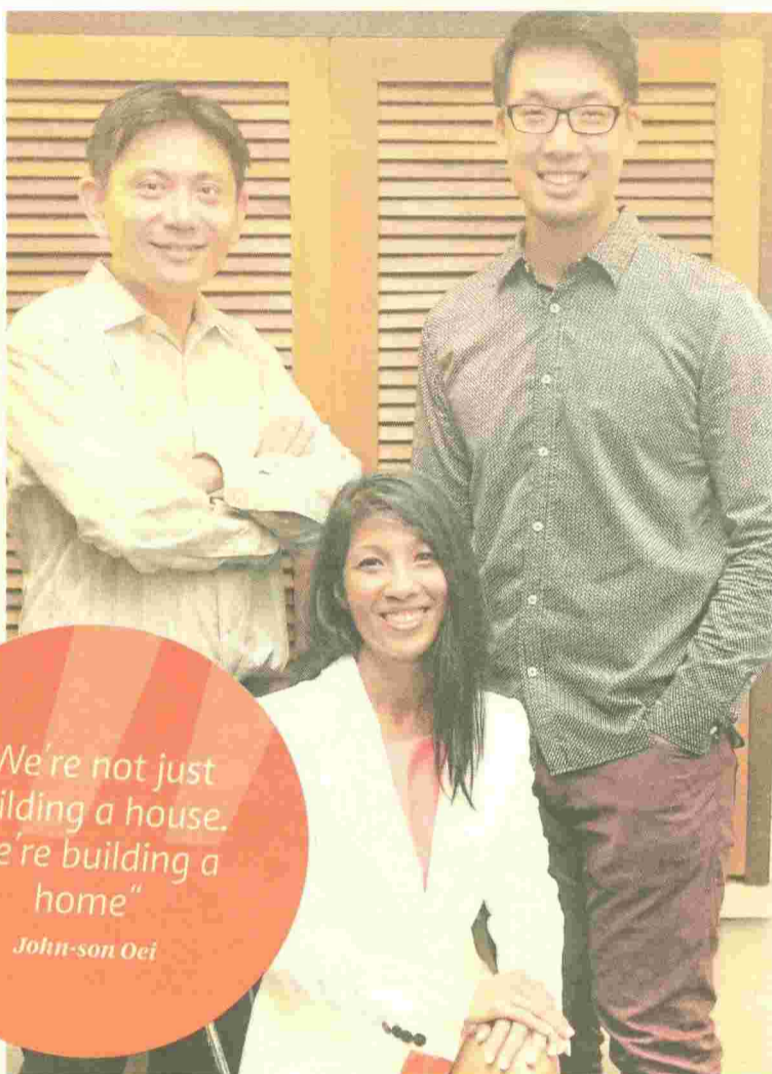
FOR the immediate future, do not throw out your empty cartons with the rest of your rubbish. Instead, rinse them out and save them because, from August to November 2013, Tetra Pak Malaysia and Nestle Malaysia will embark on the CAREton campaign. Its aim is to collect approximately 1.65 million used beverage cartons from the public. These cartons will then be recycled and made into roofing tiles.

How does a used beverage carton become a roof tile?

Tetra Pak Malaysia environment manager Manjula Murugesan, 35, explains this process. "A beverage carton has six layers which include paper (75 per cent), aluminium (5 per cent) and plastic (20 per cent). The used cartons are put into a hydropulper. This is like a giant washing machine. It separates these layers into what's fibre-based and what's poly-aluminium-based. We use the fibre to make things like recycled paper and cardboard liners. The poly-aluminium becomes something called poly-al boards. These are shaped into Poly-Al roofing tiles or, as we like to call them, Green Roof."

Nestle Liquid Drinks business executive manager Teo Heng Keat, 43, explains: "This is the second year Tetra Pak and Nestle are working together on the campaign."

Manjula, who is from Terengganu and counts herself as one of the lucky few who has seen a leatherback turtle lay its eggs, elaborates on the project. "From these 1.65 million cartons, we



"We're not just building a house. We're building a home"

John-Son Oei

Epic Collaborative CEO **John-Son Oei** (left), Tetra Pak environment manager **Manjula Murugesan** (centre) and Nestle's **Teo**.

will be able to create up to 230 roof tiles. These roof tiles will be used to help build houses. For each house, we have calculated that we will need about 46 tiles."

The third participant of this project is Epic Collaborative. Its CEO John-Son Oei, 26, adds: "We are planning to build five houses in impoverished, rural communities."

This need to help communities began as a social enterprise and serves as a platform for organisations to help the public in a fun and easy way. "About three years ago," says John-Son, "a group of us, which included a banker, a graphics designer, accountant and

someone in communications, went to a village near Batang Kali. There, we came across an Orang Asli man living in a house for two years. It was terrible. The roof was leaking and the whole area was in bad condition. We had so many questions — why didn't he help himself? Why didn't anyone help him? Why was he so poor? We knew that the easy answer would have been to just build him a house and leave. We knew that to find the answers to all our questions, we needed to build relationships with these people."

In the aftermath of the visit, the four friends decided to pursue an idea that John-Son says was initially made



Celebrating a job well done.

## MINIMISE WASTE

TETRA Pak is the world's leading food processing and packaging solutions company which practises responsible industry leadership and a sustainable approach to business. Here's what makes the Tetra Pak cartons green:

- The cartons are designed and produced based on the concept of source reduction, thereby minimising waste and economising how much energy is used to make them.
- The company acquires its renewable raw material (wood) from Scandinavia and US where

the rate of new forest growth has long exceeded the rate of tree harvesting due to advanced national forest conservation policies and practices.

• The cartons are aseptic (sterile). Therefore, these cartons can be transported and stored without refrigeration, which minimises energy wastage.

• Because of the materials used, the cartons can be safely treated by various waste-management options such as incineration and recycling the cartons.

somewhat in jest: "We wanted to know if we could make building a house as simple as something you can assemble from Ikea."

The houses had to be built by ordinary people and since those involved didn't have much time, the entire house had to be ready in three days. "So far, we've built 16 houses."

What drew John-Son and his team to the CAREton campaign was the sustainability issue that underlies Green Roofs. "Also, in the old houses, the roof was made of slabs of zinc. These became rusty and were noisy when it rained. Green Roofs are water-resistant and less noisy." That said, he's taken the prudent step of only planning to build five houses for this CAREton project.

Though concerned that collecting this huge amount of used beverage cartons in so little time might be too ambitious a project, Manjula remains hopeful of achieving their targets. "This is more than we collected last year."

Her anxiety is tempered when John-Son says: "Remember, we're not just building a house. We're building a home. Using these materials also sends a message to the public that we're promoting environmentally-friendly products."

After a pause, he adds: "There are a lot of other issues here as well. While it's not our intention to force these Orang Asli people to accept our modern way of life, the way I see it,

change is inevitable. With all that's happening, either modern society goes into their world or they have to come out. In this village that we visited, one generation of Orang Asli is already there. They've embraced a lot of our modern ways and they're littering the place. With projects like these, at least they'll have a guide as to what can be done. If we can show them, tangibly, how what they say is waste can be made into something useful, that will be good."

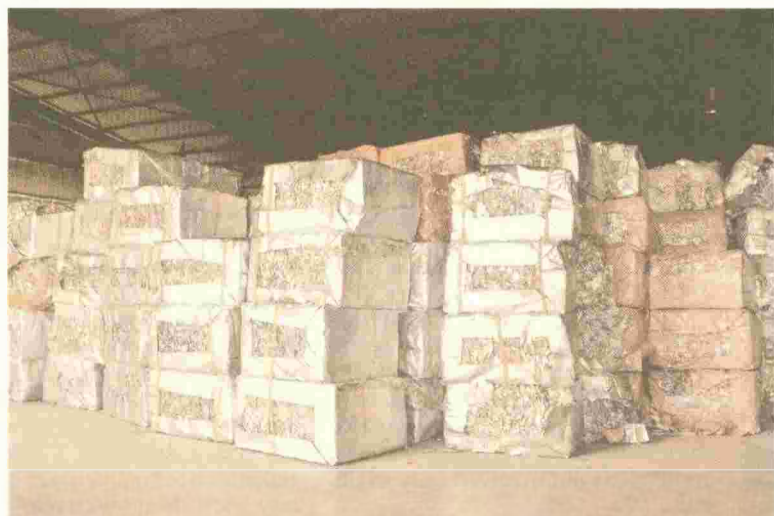
Once the campaign is launched, the public can deposit their used cartons in several locations that Tetra Pak has set up.

"For now, we have collection points at Publika and several Aeon supermarkets in the Klang Valley. We also have several school programmes running. We're updating the information about locations all the time."

As the discussion comes to a close, John-Son continues to share his excitement. "There is a rich culture among the Orang Asli. They live together; they help each other. When they know they're going to receive a house from us, relatives will help the house owner to prepare the land. Everyone chips in."

Taking a deep breath, Manjula joins in, saying: "So, please don't throw your cartons away. We need all 1.65 million cartons by Nov 30 so we can help these people."

Go to [www.tetrapak.com](http://www.tetrapak.com) for more information.



Used beverage cartons in bales.



The finished product — Poly-Al roofing sheets.