

# Your submission to Proposed mandatory phase out of single-use plastic shopping bags

The Packaging Forum

## Reference no: 5879

Submitter Type: Business / Industry

### Clause

1. Do you agree with the proposed mandatory phase out of the sale or distribution of single-use plastic shopping bags in New Zealand, including those made of degradable (eg, oxo-degradable, biodegradable and compostable) plastic? Why / why not?

### Position

Yes

### Notes

The Packaging Forum supports a mandatory phase out of the sale or distribution of single use plastic shopping bags including those made of degradable plastic. The Packaging Forum provided input to the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment's research into bio/degradable and compostable plastics and shares the concern there are many supposedly environmentally-friendly plastics coming onto the market, but it is extremely difficult for consumers to make sense of their respective claims and how they are disposed of. The Packaging Forum is leading a Working Group to recommend a NZ compost standard and to identify facilities where packaging meeting the standard could be processed. If degradable bags are excluded from the ban then these will end up in our soft plastic recycling bins and will contaminate these materials.

### Clause

2. We have proposed a mandatory phase out of single-use plastic shopping bags. This could include under 50 microns or under 70 microns in thickness. If you agree with a mandatory phase out, which option do you prefer, and why?

### Position

less than 70 microns in thickness

### Notes

Trials are currently underway with reusable bags by supermarkets that are 50 to 60 microns in thickness. Based on our experience as managers of the Soft Plastic Recycling Scheme, the following issues need to be considered: • Reusable bags need to be reused multiple times before they are recycled; • Choose bags which are made from recyclable materials; and • We require New Zealand processors to be able to take the materials. At present we have New Zealand processors that take Polyethylene but we are seeking NZ processors that can take the polypropylene bags.

### Clause

3. Are you aware of types of single-use plastic shopping bags that should be exempt from a mandatory phase out?

### Position

No

### Notes

### Clause

4. Do you currently manufacture, sell, provide or import for sale or personal use these types of single-use plastic shopping bags:

### Position

No

### Notes

### Clause

5. Should smaller retailers be exempted from a mandatory phase out of single-use plastic shopping bags? Why / why not?

### Position

No

### Notes

Based on a recent audit conducted for the Soft Plastic Recycling Scheme by Waste Not Consulting (August 2018) the single use carrier bags from supermarkets, retail chains and dairies which are dropped off from consumers comprised 31.6% branded carrier bags and 68.4% unbranded carrier bags. Bags from smaller outlets also contribute to litter when disposed of incorrectly or as fugitive litter if they blow away from bins. For the ban to be effective in eliminating the estimated 800 million carrier bags consumed annually in New Zealand it needs to be comprehensive.

### Clause

7. The proposed mandatory phase-out period for single-use plastic shopping bags is at least six months from when regulations are

Gazetted , subject to consultation. Do you agree with this timing?

**Position**

Yes

**Notes**

Given the supermarkets and other leading retailers have signalled a move away from single use plastic during 2018 and many other companies have been considering alternatives, phasing out bags after six months is adequate timing. we are already noting a reduction in single use carrier bags in our collections.

**Clause**

8. Do you agree that the benefits expected from implementing a mandatory phase out of single-use plastic shopping bags exceed the costs expected from implementing the phase out? Why / why not? Please consider both monetary and non-monetary costs and benefits (those that can be measured by money as well as those that can't).

**Notes**

The introduction of a ban on single use plastic bags delivers an environmental benefit. Single use plastic carrier bags are not essential packaging. They can and are being replaced by alternatives. Removing bags from circulation will remove around 3000 tonnes of this plastic from the NZ market (800 million bags) although it is to be noted that use of reusable bags with a higher gauge of plastic will offset this benefit. Plastic carrier bags represent around 0.3% litter (Waste Not Consulting 2018) however plastic bags are often the most prevalent litter on our beaches because the lightweight plastic is fugitive and is easily carried in the wind or along water channels/drains to the waterside. We also recommend research is conducted to assess the impact of the removal of single use plastic bags on marine pollution, beach litter counts and understand this is part of Sustainable Coastlines work on litter. Introducing a charge for plastic bags would reduce consumption but not eliminate it. If the ban is not comprehensive, then we will see shoppers potentially choose one retailer over another as has been seen in the past when stores have introduced charges or stopped providing bags. To create a level playing field for retailers, there needs to be one rule applied to all outlets.

**Clause**

9. Do you think that reasonably practicable alternatives to single-use plastic shopping bags exist in New Zealand? Why / why not?

**Notes**

Based on market research (Horizon April 2018) the number of people not taking plastic bags at check out increased from 18% in 2016 to 28% in 2018 indicating that people are moving to alternatives. Packaging Forum members are importing or manufacturing reusable bags. We need to see NZ manufacturing of reusable bags or containers and that these should be made from recycled materials to create a circular economy.

**Clause**

10. How can people be encouraged to reuse multiple-use shopping bags enough times to offset the environmental impacts of producing them? (select one or more)

**Notes**

We are already seeing a marked increase in reusable bags being dropped off in the soft plastic recycling bins. It is important that reusable bags do not become the de facto single use bag. Supermarkets already have incentives for encouraging reuse (credit at check out for number of reusable bags etc). Reusable bags need to be durable to be an effective "bag for life" and need to be marketed as such.

**Clause**

12. How can data on single-use plastic shopping bags and other single-use plastics entering the market and monitoring of reductions be improved?

**Notes**

The Packaging Forum is working with GS1 to better understand consumption data for all packaging materials and has recommended that MFE supports and invests in this work programme.

**Clause**

13. Please provide any additional comments or suggestions about the proposed mandatory phase out of single-use plastic shopping bags.

**Notes**

In the UK, FMCG retail outlets have increased security at the exit because people do not have to use a store's bag, they may be walking out with loose items or put them in another retail branded bag. We would recommend that NZ Retailers Association is involved in monitoring how UK retailers have managed/mitigated this risk.