

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

Data Harvest Ltd

Reference no: 878

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

No

Notes

My issue is with the scope. Starch based bags carrying internationally recognised certifications for compostability and environmental wellbeing should be exempt as they are in other countries

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

Other (please specify)

Notes

The thickness is not the key issue, it's what the bag is made of, if it is plastic that breaks down to harmful elements or not at all that's still not ok, we should be using fit for purpose starch based alternatives! Even multi use heavy plastic bags will be disposed of at some point. End of life 'likely scenario' needs to be looked at more closely

Clause

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

Position

Yes

Notes

Those that comply with Australian Standard AS4736-2006 or European EN13432 could be a good guide to use as a 'best practice' filter, for compostability and degradation to non toxic components, we need to look at global best practice guidelines rather than an arbitrary blanket ban

Clause

3a. If yes, what are they and why should they be exempt?

Notes

Starch based certified compostable carry bags would offer a practical alternative to current plastic bags, and while they are more expensive, it does give the consumer a reasonable and practical way of transporting goods that if clean can still be used multiple times, and can also be used for practical dilemmas like kitchen waste bin liners. These will eventually completely break down in landfill rather than conventional plastic bags commonly used for this purpose. It's important to offer a sane and sensible option if hoping for success in stemming the tide of plastics

Clause

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

Position

Yes - 50 microns or less in thickness

Notes

Because people need to transport plants from garden centres and these are generally wet and sometimes dirty with potting mix, we have been looking into better types of plastic equivalent products that will still hold up to containing their wet passengers! I've been testing starch alternatives and they appear to both hold up to the short term need to transport plants and do appear to degrade in even the home compost though they theoretically are supposed to need the higher temperatures to degrade quickly, this is encouraging and it would be nice to be able to promote plant based bags for transporting plants. We are a green sector, so of course we do want to do the right thing as well as have a practical solution for our garden centres!

Clause

4a. If yes, please explain how a phase out would be likely to impact on you.

Notes

We would need to abandon our plans to introduce starch based compostable bags and boot liners for garden centres unless we could be exempt for our plant based options. This means that gardeners would need to transport their plants in other ways somehow, and in real terms it may just be too much of a hassle for some of our new gardeners trying to carry multiple wet and dirty pots, we really want more people in New Zealand gardening as it is a great green industry that helps the planet in many ways! So a well intentioned policy could end up having a negative consequence!

Clause

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

Notes

I just wonder how this is helping, surely access to better technologies of single use materials is the way to go rather than exempting SME's and how do you define small?

Clause

6. If smaller retailers are exempted from a mandatory phase out of single-use plastic shopping bags and they are defined by their number of full-time equivalent employees, what should that number be?

Notes

See above, can we not offer a better and certified and globally recognised alternative bag, it would be a lot easier to police!!!

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

No

Notes

You would be wise to make it longer or you'll get dumping of non compliant bags anyway, and that's not what's wanted surely

Clause

7a. If no, what do you think would be a more appropriate phase-out period?

Position

one year

Notes

This should help people work through their stock holdings and probably consumers will hoard and re-use plastic bags knowing they cannot get them in the future, this is human nature

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

I think the issue is that yes plastic bags that do not break down and leave toxic and harmful residue in the environment absolutely have to go. I just think if we CAN establish a practical and truly compostable alternative that leaves no harmful residues why would this not be a better alternative? It's almost the perfect answer. I am absolutely 100% behind getting plastics out of our landfills and waterways, it is a non-negotiable aim, we just need to ensure we go about it in a sustainable way that doesn't have unintended negative consequences for instance the use of even thicker and equally environmentally harmful or non eco-friendly alternatives

Clause

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

Position

Yes

Notes

Single use or limited use starch based bags are here and are the same ones that are used in Europe and major nations, there is good support data that these are a much better alternative. We do see multi use bags springing up all over the place and these are great and already extensively used, we just need a single use option where this is needed for practical reasons

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)

Position

voluntary incentive schemes by individual retailers

Notes

I'd give a tax rebate to retailers to help them incentivise and promote their own local solutions to this one. We are dealing with human behaviour ie 'forgot my bag' or 'didn't think I needed a bag' and habits so solutions need to be at the point of the behaviour ie at store level

Clause

11. What would help you and your family adjust to life without single-use plastic shopping bags?

Notes

A cost effective alternative that isn't even worse!!

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

You need to work with the manufacturers I would have thought to get to the solutions

Clause

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

Notes

Please do consult experts on the data on plant based solutions like starch or forestry waste by products etc. I think Scion and some other entities are working hard in this space and have scientists who should be consulted in the area of biopolymers, it could be a really exciting opportunity for New Zealand but we need the legislation to have vision and be well informed to allow us to develop world leading solutions to this challenge