

Ko te whakamimiti i te pānga
o te kirihou ki tō tātou taiao
**Reducing the impact of
plastic on our environment**



Have your say...

Public consultation **12 August – 4 December 2020**



Ministry for the
Environment
Manatū Mo Te Taiao

New Zealand Government

New Zealanders care deeply about plastic waste and pollution, and want to do the right thing. Yet we also have one of the highest rates of waste-to-landfill per capita in the OECD.

We embraced the plastic shopping bag ban in 2019, and this started a growing momentum to tackle the challenge of plastic waste.

In December 2019, the office of the Prime Minister's Chief Science Advisor released the report *Rethinking Plastics in Aotearoa New Zealand*. Following this, the Government pledged to shift away from low-value, and hard-to-recycle plastics and phase-out more single-use items.

This pledge is part of a wider ambition to make New Zealand an economy where plastic rarely becomes waste or pollution, and we protect our natural environment and marine life from the impacts of plastic waste.

Plastic is fundamental to today's world. But when it is overused, not disposed of properly, or escapes into the environment, it can cause significant damage.

Driving change in the 2020s

To change how we use plastic, and reduce its impact on our environment, we need a system that:

- ▶ enables New Zealanders to use less plastic overall
- ▶ ensures we reuse, repurpose or recycle any plastics we retain, to keep them moving within our economy for as long as possible.

The Government has considered a range of options for driving change, including voluntary and regulatory tools. The preferred option is a mandatory phase-out (a ban).

What we are proposing

The Government proposes regulations to phase out:

- ▶ certain hard-to-recycle plastic types (**Proposal 1**)
- ▶ seven single-use items (**Proposal 2**).

Under section 23(1)(b) of the Waste Minimisation Act 2008, regulations can be made to prohibit the sale and manufacture of products that contain a specified material (eg, plastic).

Learn more

For full details of the proposal, see the consultation document [Reducing the impact of plastic on our environment](#).

1

PROPOSAL ONE:

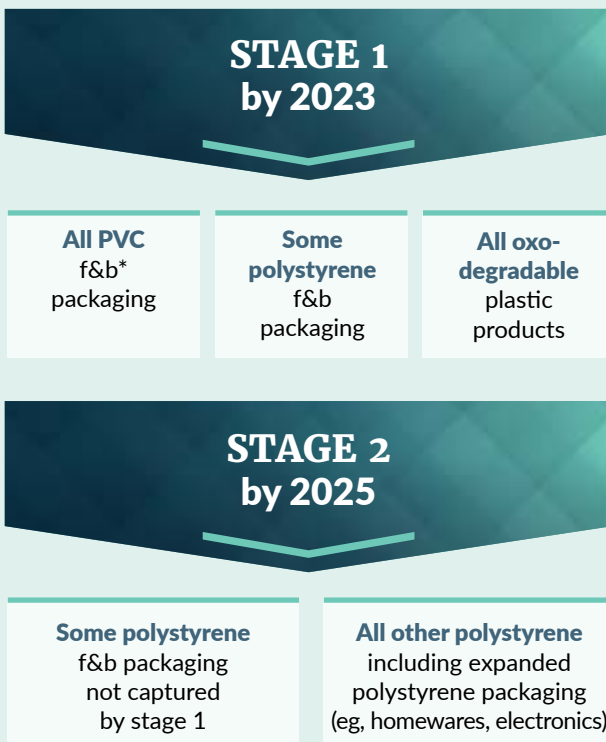
Phase out hard-to-recycle plastics

The Government proposes to phase-out:

- ▶ all PVC food and beverage packaging
- ▶ all polystyrene food and beverage packaging
- ▶ all other expanded polystyrene packaging
- ▶ all oxo-degradable plastic products.

The phase-outs would follow two stages.

Please see the [full consultation document](#) (page 38) for further details.



*f&b – food and beverage

Why phase out PVC, polystyrene and oxo-degradable plastics?

We are targeting PVC and polystyrene packaging because they are a bigger problem for recycling than other plastics (such as PET). In many cases there are alternative plastics that are easier to recycle.

Some of the issues with PVC and polystyrene are listed below.

- ▶ They are low in volume and value, and we cannot readily recycle them in New Zealand.
- ▶ Overseas markets to recycle them are limited. Barriers to these markets include distance, scale of production, and global restrictions on waste imports.
- ▶ They contaminate recycling streams, devaluing higher-value plastics and potentially sending them to landfill.
- ▶ PVC looks almost identical to high-value plastic PET, making it hard for recyclers to separate.
- ▶ They are a known source of pollution. Expanded polystyrene often breaks down into small, lightweight and easily wind-blown pieces that are difficult to capture.

Issues with oxo-degradable plastic

Oxo-degradable plastic includes an additive to make it break down faster in the environment. In reality, it still degrades into smaller pieces (microplastics), though at a faster rate than traditional types. It cannot be composted or recycled, and is another source of contamination for our recycling system. The additives may also have toxic effects on the environment.



2

PROPOSAL TWO:

Take action on single-use plastic items






Seven single-use products have been identified as problems in the waste or litter streams. Many have reusable alternatives:

- ▶ single-use produce bags
- ▶ tableware (eg, plastic plates, bowls, cutlery)
- ▶ non-compostable produce stickers
- ▶ drink stirrers
- ▶ some single-use cups and lids. Includes plastic-lined paper cups, but not disposable coffee cups
- ▶ plastic cotton buds
- ▶ plastic straws.

Why phase out more single-use items?

These proposals follow on from the success of the single-use plastic bag ban in 2019. The seven items were selected using criteria including environmental harm, sustainable alternatives and international trends.

People commonly discard these items after one use. Yet it often takes a lot of resources to produce single-use plastics. They are also more likely to become litter due to their 'on the go' convenience, low cost and the lack of incentives for reuse or recycling.

7 single-use plastic items to consider for phase-out 2020/21		 Alternatives
Item for phase-out	Potential definition	
Single-use plastic produce bags 	A lightweight bag under 70 microns thick, without handles, for carrying fruit and vegetables.	No plastic bags Reusable produce bags made from alternatives like hessian, hemp and cotton 
Single-use plastic tableware (plates/trays, bowls) and cutlery 	Plastic tableware and cutlery intended for single use (including multi-packs).	Reusable plates, crockery and cutlery Paper, cardboard or bamboo alternatives 



Alternatives

Item for phase-out

Potential definition

Non-compostable produce stickers



Any single-use sticker on fruits or vegetables sold in New Zealand and made partly or wholly of plastic that is not compostable.

No stickers

Compostable stickers



Plastic drink stirrers



A short stick to stir drinks, made partly or wholly of plastic.

Wooden stirrers

Reusable stirrers (eg, metal spoons)



Single-use plastic cups and lids (not including disposable coffee cups)



Single-use plastic cups and their lids, made from hard-to-recycle plastics (plastics 3, 4, 6 and 7), including paper cups with plastic or wax linings, provided singly or in bulk-packs.

Exemptions for single-use plastic cups made from recyclable plastics (1, 2 and 5).

Note: does not include disposable coffee cups and their lids.

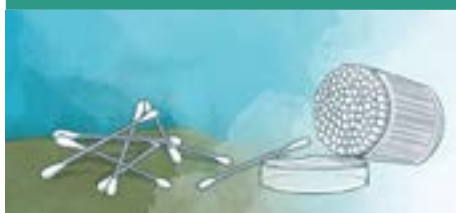
Reusable cups

Paper cups

Cups made from PET, HDPE or polypropylene could be exempt as these are more likely to be recyclable.



Plastic cotton buds



A small rod made wholly or partly of plastic with cotton wrapped around one or both ends; not designed or intended for reuse.

Cotton buds with stems made from paper, bamboo or other materials

Reusable cotton buds (replaceable heads)



Plastic straws



Drinking straw made wholly or partly from plastic; not designed or intended for reuse.

Exemptions will be considered to allow access to plastic straws for disabled people and for medical purposes.

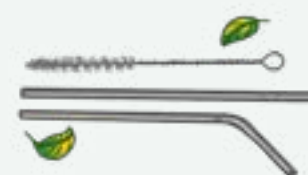
Note: plastic straws can be important for disabled people who require a straw to drink. We will consider ways to ensure access to straws for those who need them. This can include exemptions or other options.

No straws

Reusable metal or bamboo straws

Edible straws

Paper straws



Plastic resin identification code

Quick reference guide

Understanding plastic






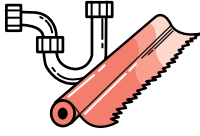



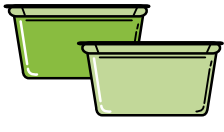

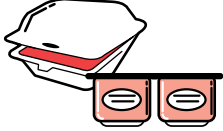


Plastic can be a very practical and unique material, with many important uses in modern society. It is lightweight and can be used to preserve food, improve health, safety and hygiene, and can be reusable or recyclable.

Unfortunately, not all plastic types and products can be easily reused or recycled.

To support New Zealand's move towards a low-carbon, low-waste economy we need to take action

on problem plastics. This includes plastics that cannot be recycled or reused, are designed to be thrown away, or can easily be replaced by more sustainable materials.

The numbering of plastics (resin codes) can also be confusing, especially when similar items are made from different types of plastic, some of which can be recycled, while others can't. A guide to plastic resin identification is below. Details on the plastic types and items proposed for phase-out can be found in the [full consultation document](#).

		COMMON PRODUCTS OF EACH CATEGORY		
EASIER TO RECYCLE	 <p>1 PET</p>	<p>Polyethylene Terephthalate</p>	<p>water bottles</p> <p>fizzy drink bottles</p>	
	 <p>2 HDPE</p>	<p>High-density Polyethylene</p>	<p>milk bottles</p> <p>shampoo bottles</p> <p>laundry detergent containers</p>	
DIFFICULT TO RECYCLE	 <p>3 PVC</p>	<p>Polyvinyl Chloride</p>	<p>vinyl</p> <p>tubing/pipe</p> <p>biscuit trays</p> <p>commercial cling wrap</p>	
POSSIBLE TO RECYCLE	 <p>4 LDPE</p>	<p>Low-density Polyethylene</p>	<p>soft plastic products</p> <p>bread bags</p> <p>squeeze bottles</p> <p>plastic film</p>	
EASIER TO RECYCLE	 <p>5 PP</p>	<p>Polypropylene</p>	<p>most temperature resistant containers</p> <p>takeaway containers</p> <p>ice-cream tubs</p>	
DIFFICULT TO RECYCLE	 <p>6 PS</p>	<p>Polystyrene</p>	<p>yoghurt pots (six-packs)</p> <p>solo cups and CD cases</p> <p>expanded polystyrene cups (eg, styrofoam)</p>	
	 <p>7 OTHER</p>	<p>All other plastics</p>	<p>toys</p> <p>compostible packaging (eg, Polyactic Acid)</p> <p>sippy cups</p> <p>CDs/DVDs and lenses</p>	

Easier to recycle (commonly collected by council recycling schemes) | Possible to recycle (sometimes recycled) | Difficult to recycle (not often recycled)

Reducing the impact of plastic on our environment

Plastic is fundamental to today's world. But when it is overused, not disposed of properly, or escapes into the environment, it can cause significant damage.

This consultation proposes steps to move us away from hard-to-recycle and single-use plastics. This will help us to clean up our towns, cities, beaches, moana and whenua. It will also improve how we recover resources, and reduce waste to landfill.

Ko te whakamimiti i te pānga o te kirihou ki tō tātou taiao

Ko te kirihou he mea tino whaitake i tēnei ao nei. Heoi, ina kaha rawa te whakamahia, ina hē rānei te porowhīua, ina rere rānei ki te taiao, ka nui pea ngā pānga kino nei.

Ko tā te uiuinga nei he whakatakoto i ētahi takahanga ki tua o te whakamahi i ngā hangarua-mārō me ngā hangarua-rangitahi. He āwhina nui tēnei i a tātou, ki te whakapai i ō tātou tāone, tāone nui, tātahi, moana, whenua anō hoki. Ka whakapiki hoki tēnei i tā tātou whakahoki rauemi me te whakamimiti i te para ki ngā ruapara.

Kei te hiahia mātou ki te rongō i ō whakaaro. Tēnā, kōrerohia o whakaaro mō tēnei uiuinga taiao motuhake.

Facts about plastic in Aotearoa New Zealand's environment

Our Marine Environment 2019 report

The Ministry for the Environment and Stats NZ's *Our Marine Environment 2019* report showed that our activities on land are polluting our marine environment.

Plastic is the most common type of litter on our beaches. At six out of seven selected survey areas, unidentified hard plastic fragments were in the top two types of plastic litter by item count.

This data was provided by the Sustainable Coastline's Litter Intelligence programme, which found across all surveys that plastic litter makes up 60.9 per cent (by count, and 9.8 per cent by weight) of items.

Manawatū River Source-to-Sea

In 2019 Manawatū River Source-to-Sea environment network reported on waste collected at sites around Palmerston North. It found over 80 per cent of the waste was some form of plastic, and 93 per cent was non-recyclable.

Keep New Zealand Beautiful

Data collected by Keep New Zealand Beautiful in a 2018 National Litter Audit paints a similar picture for other regions. Keep New Zealand Beautiful ranked plastic as the second most common item found per 1000 square metres nationwide.

The top ranked litter item was cigarette butts, which contain plastic filters.

We want to hear your views.
Have your say on this important
environment consultation.

Your feedback

We are seeking your input because we want to know the possible costs and benefits, potential unintended consequences, timing and possible exemptions (for example, for accessibility, making plastic straws available to those who need them).

Please help us ensure the best outcomes for the environment and our communities by telling us anything we may have missed, and any specific impacts on you and your whānau.

Making a submission

For full details on the proposals, the problems we are trying to solve and the options we considered, please read the full consultation document: <https://www.mfe.govt.nz/publications/waste/reducing-impact-of-plastic-our-environment-moving-away-from-hard-to-recycle-and-single-use-items>

Kia tuku tāpaetanga

Mō ngā whakamahuki mō tēnei uiuinga, mō ngā wero e ngana nei mātou kia tutuki me ngā kōwhiringa i whakaarohia ai e mātou, tēnā pānuihia te katoa o te pepa uiuinga: <https://www.mfe.govt.nz/publications/waste/reducing-impact-of-plastic-our-environment-moving-away-from-hard-to-recycle-and-single-use-items>



Online

You can make your submission online.

For details please see: <https://www.mfe.govt.nz/reducing-impact-of-plastic-on-environment>



Email

You can also email a submission to: plastics.consultation@mfe.govt.nz



Post

Or post a submission to:
Plastics Consultation
Ministry for the Environment
PO Box 10362, Wellington, 6143,
New Zealand

Submissions close at 5 pm on Friday, 4 December 2020



Ministry for the
Environment
Manatū Mo Te Taiao

Published in October 2020 by the
Ministry for the Environment
Publication number: INFO 991

Cover photo credit: Keep New Zealand Beautiful