



# Aotearoa New Zealand Single-use plastics ban

## 2023 Guide for businesses

### What items are banned?

From **1 July 2023**, bans or restrictions apply to:



Single-use plastic  
drinking straws\*



Single-use  
plastic cutlery



Single-use plastic  
plates, bowls, trays  
and platters without lids



Single-use plastic  
produce bags



Single-use plastic  
produce labels\*

The ban applies where the items are sold or supplied for free, and where they are provided individually or in packets.

Compostable or 'plant-based' plastic alternatives are also banned for all items, except produce labels.

\*Some exemptions apply to these items.  
See inside for details.

### Why is a ban being introduced?

Plastic regularly ends up as waste in our environment, harming our wildlife and contaminating our food and water. Many plastic items are single-use; they are often used only once before being disposed of.

Shifting away from single-use plastics will help reduce plastic waste, improve our recycling systems and protect our environment.

With the help of this change New Zealand will avoid sending hundreds of millions of single-use plastic items to landfill each year.

### Who does the ban apply to?

The ban applies to all businesses and organisations.

Key sectors include:

- Retail and hospitality businesses, such as cafes, bars, restaurants, hotels, takeaway food outlets, party and discount stores, supermarkets, market stalls, festivals and events.
- Suppliers, such as manufacturers, distributors, importers, wholesalers, and online marketplaces.
- Organisations and not-for-profits, such as health and community services, charities, community groups, sporting clubs, schools, and government bodies.

## Straws & cutlery

### Banned

**The ban applies to:** single-use plastic drinking straws\* and cutlery, such as knives, forks, spoons, chopsticks and sporks.

**The ban does not apply to:** serving utensils (eg, tongs, cake servers, scoops provided with medicine/washing powder/infant formula).



### Allowed

First, consider if you really need to keep supplying these items, especially if many of your customers consume your products at home or in the office. Then, consider reusable items such as metal or silicone. If you need disposable alternatives, consider uncoated paper, wood or bamboo.

#### \*Exemptions for single-use plastic drinking straws:

- Single-use plastic straws can be a vital accessibility aid for some disabled people and those with health needs. Supermarkets, pharmacies, cafes, ACC and health and disability support services can provide plastic straws on request to people who rely on them. Proof of disability is not required.
- From 1 January 2026, straws integrated into the packaging of a product by machine automated process (eg, straw attached to juice box) will also be banned.



## Tableware

### Banned

**The ban applies to:** single-use plastic plates, bowls, trays and platters without lids.

**The ban does not apply to:** fibre-based tableware with a plastic (or bioplastic) lining, or other takeaway containers (eg, triangle sandwich containers or bowls/containers with lids).



### Allowed

First, consider if customers could bring their own plates or bowls, especially at events. Then, consider reusable options such as ceramic or metal. If most of your customers dine in-store you could save money and waste by using washable items.

If you need disposable alternatives, consider plates and bowls made from paper, bamboo, or sugarcane pulp. Consider alternatives that are free from Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) which are becoming a serious concern.



## Produce bags

### Banned

**The ban applies to:** single-use plastic produce bags that are provided and used to pack loose fresh fruit or vegetables at the place of purchase.

The ban includes produce bags of any thickness, as well as those made from compostable, recyclable or 'degradable' plastic.

**The ban does not apply to other bags,** such as:

- Single-use plastic bags used for any other fresh or cooked produce (eg, deli meats, seafood, cheeses, or dried/preserved produce such as nuts)
- Pre-packaged produce in bags (sealed or unsealed) –these are fruit or vegetables that are bagged before being put on sale (eg, pre-packaged lettuce, sealed bag of apples, herbs in a plastic sleeve)
- Waste bags (bin liners, animal/medical waste bags)



### Allowed

First, consider reducing consumption of bags, for example, by reusing cardboard boxes. Next, consider selling lightweight reusable bags, such as fabric or mesh. Customers should also be encouraged to bring their own lightweight reusable bags. Then, if you still need to supply a disposable bag, consider sustainably sourced or recycled paper bags.

Please note that plastic produce bags containing compostable or 'plant-based' plastic are **not** allowed.



## What about...

### ...compostable plastic alternatives?

**Compostable, biodegradable or 'plant-based' plastic alternatives are included in the ban (except produce labels).**

Most compostable plastics don't actually end up in a composting system. They are often simply sent to landfill or are littered, in which case they behave just like conventional plastic. If they are composted, they may still have adverse soil impacts, for example, microplastics and chemicals can remain in the environment following the physical breakdown of materials. Many products that claim to be home compostable don't actually degrade in a typical home composting environment.

If an item looks or feels like plastic, but claims to be made from PLA, PHA, corn, sugarcane, wheat or any other 'natural' source it may still be a plastic. This includes plastic items with composting certifications.

When ordering alternatives to banned plastic items (other than produce labels), ask your supplier to confirm in writing that the items **do not contain any form of plastic polymer**, including compostable plastic or bioplastic. Logos, labelling or product claims are not proof of compliance.



### ...reusable plastic items?

A banned single-use item is defined as one that is designed or intended to be used only once or a limited number of times before being disposed of.

If you are a business or organisation that sells or supplies reusable plastic items, you may want to consider other factors to determine whether your product is genuinely reusable (eg, a warranty, ordinary consumer behaviour, compliance to an overseas reusability standard, or whether the product meets a dishwashing standard).

Please visit the Ministry's website for more guidance on determining whether your product is likely to be single-use or reusable.

## Produce labels

Non-home compostable plastic produce labels are being phased out in two stages.



- **From 1 July 2023**, non-home compostable plastic produce labels for domestic fruit & vegetables are banned (not including adhesive).
- **From 1 July 2025**, the whole label, including its adhesive, must be home compostable, including labels on imported produce.

If you need a disposable produce label, it must be certified home compostable by achieving standards AS 5810-2010 or NF T51-800. Visit the Ministry's website to learn more about the phase out of produce labels.

## Steps to prepare

### 1. Manage stock

Check your stock ranges and ensure you no longer supply banned items.

- Check with your supplier as they may accept returns or exchanges of unopened stock.
- If you have excess stock, contact a local recycler to see if they can accept any of your items.

You cannot supply banned stock after 1 July 2023, even if you purchased it before this date.

### 2. Consider your options

Before you simply replace items, think about how you can avoid use, increase reusability or reduce waste.

1. **Avoidance:** First, think about whether you need to keep supplying items like disposable cutlery if your customers do not really need them.
2. **Reusable:** Look at whether you can supply or sell washable alternatives especially if many customers dine in-store or at an event where they could return items.
3. **Disposable:** If you need disposable items, speak to your supplier about the most sustainable options for your business, such as responsibly sourced paper, bamboo or wood alternatives.

Remember to confirm (in writing) that they **do not contain any form of plastic polymer**, including compostable or degradable plastic.

If you are unsure about options, check the website, call the hotline or email us.

### 3. Inform your team and customers

Help your staff and customers understand the ban, by informing them of the positive changes you have made to comply with the ban. We recommend displaying signage available on the Ministry's website to help your customers prepare.

## How will the ban be enforced?

Unless specific exemptions apply, banned items cannot be sold or provided from 1 July 2023, even if they were purchased before the ban.

The New Zealand Government will first work with businesses to ensure they understand their obligations, however penalties may apply for non-compliance.

The Ministry for the Environment is responsible for enforcing the ban. Suspected non-compliance can be reported from 1 July 2023 via the online form:

[report-plastic.paperform.co](https://www.mfe.govt.nz/report-plastic-paperform-co)

## What items are banned already?

Some single-use plastic items have already been phased out in previous plastic bans.

**From 1 July 2019**, lightweight plastic shopping bags with handles, less than 70 microns in thickness, were banned in Aotearoa New Zealand. This has meant 1 billion fewer plastic bags have ended up in landfills or the ocean.

**As of 1 October 2022**, it is illegal to provide, sell or manufacture the following items in Aotearoa New Zealand:

- × PVC food trays and containers
- × Polystyrene takeaway food and drink packaging
- × Expanded polystyrene food and drink packaging
- × Plastic with pro-degradant additives
- × Plastic drink stirrers
- × Plastic cotton buds

Visit the Ministry's website for more information on the previous bans.

## MORE INFORMATION



The New Zealand Government is visiting businesses nationwide, holding information sessions, and providing a tollfree hotline for businesses. Further information, resources and signage are available on the website.

[environment.govt.nz/plastics](https://environment.govt.nz/plastics) | 0800 499 700 | [plastics@mfe.govt.nz](mailto:plastics@mfe.govt.nz)