

## Questions and Answers for Plastics Ban – 1 October 2022

### What is being banned in October?

From 1 October 2022 it is illegal to provide, sell or manufacture certain hard-to-recycle and single use plastic products in New Zealand. These are:

- Single use plastic drink stirrers
- Single use plastic cotton buds
- Plastics with pro-degradant additives that make them fragment into micro-plastics
- Certain PVC food trays and containers
- Polystyrene takeaway food and beverage packaging
- Expanded polystyrene food and beverage packaging (such as foamy takeaway containers or some instant noodle cups).

More detail on the products banned can be found at [Guidance on the 1 October 2022 plastic phase outs](#)

This is the first of three consecutive phase-outs. Two more tranches are following this one:

- Single-use plastic produce bags, plastic tableware, plastic straws and non-home compostable produce labels will be banned by mid-2023.
- All other PVC and polystyrene food and beverage packaging not covered by the first two tranches will be banned by mid-2025.

### Why are these items being banned?

Plastic is one of our greatest environmental challenges. It regularly ends up as waste in our landfills, moana, and whenua. 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.

Stopping the sale of unnecessary and problematic plastics will reduce waste to landfill, improve our recycling systems and encourage reusable or environmentally responsible alternatives.

As a nation, we embraced the 2019 plastic bag shopping ban – which has meant over 1 billion fewer plastic bags ended up in landfills or the ocean.

Following that success, we're now focused on the phase out of more problematic plastic items – to remove more than 2 billion items every year.

### Has there been any public consultation on plastics bans?

The Government consulted publicly on its plastics phase-out proposals in 2020. This was part of a broader response to *the Rethinking Plastics in Aotearoa New Zealand* report released by the Prime Minister's Chief Science Advisor in 2019.

The Ministry for the Environment received close to 8,000 submissions during the consultation. Most were in support of the proposals. There was a good level of response from the general public, affected businesses, environmental and community groups, and local government agencies.

The policy was announced in June 2021 to provide certainty around timing and the plastic products that were to be phased out. Additionally, regulations were published six months ago to meet New Zealand's international trade obligations and to provide further detail for businesses to adapt and change.

### **Why are these products being phased out now?**

Items that are easier to replace are being phased out sooner than those that are more challenging to replace. This approach strikes a balance between the public feedback for fast action and providing businesses with adequate time to prepare.

Phasing out single use and hard to recycle plastics is part of the Government's waste reduction work programme.

Consultation work in 2020 showed there was broad public support to phase-out these products.

Alternatives are readily available to these products and industry has indicated that they are ready for these changes.

### **Why aren't we banning all plastic?**

Plastic has many useful qualities that make it a suitable packaging product. Plastic is lightweight, durable, cheap to produce, can play an important role in reducing food waste and protecting the life of a product.

This policy is about reducing the harm to our environment from plastics that are difficult to recycle including food and drink packaging made from PVC and polystyrene, plastics that degrade into microplastics in the environment, and single-use items.

Phasing out hard-to-recycle plastics will improve our recycling system, reduce confusion and make it easier to recycle in New Zealand.

The Government is focused on moving away from hard-to-recycle plastics and finding innovative solutions where current alternatives are not readily available.

Other projects already underway to reduce plastics include regulated product stewardship schemes for plastic packaging, a potential container return scheme, kerbside standardisation, and investment in recycling infrastructure. You can find more information about this work [here](#).

## What are the alternatives for the prohibited items?

The alternatives for the prohibited items are all readily available in New Zealand. Many businesses and individuals have already made changes.

| Item being phased out  | Alternatives  |
|--|---|
| Plastic drink stirrer  | Reusable spoon or wooden drink stirrer.   |
| Plastic cotton bud   | Cotton fibre-stemmed buds.  |
| Degradable plastic products  | Paper or plastic products made from PET, PP or LDPE (resin codes 1,2 and 5).  |
| PVC pre-formed trays and containers used for produce, baked goods or meat, resin code 3.   | <p>PET trays and containers (resin codes 1,2 and 5).</p> <p>Supermarkets have already moved away from selling pre-formed PVC trays and containers, although they may sell a small amount.</p> <p>PVC trays are mainly used by a small number of butchers or bakeries. However, even a low volume in our kerbside recycling system has large impacts for the recycling of other plastics like PET, which have a higher value.</p> <p>PET trays are available from NZ suppliers such as Flight Plastics or Pact and the industry are largely ready for this change.</p> |
| <p>Polystyrene packaging for food and drink:</p> <p>All expanded polystyrene packaging (eg, foamed cups and clamshells), resin code 6.</p> <p>Polystyrene takeaway packaging (eg, some sushi-trays and take-out containers), resin code 6.</p> | <p>Other plastic (resin codes 1,2 and 5) or fibre-based food and beverage packaging.</p> <p>Reusable packaging.</p>   |

## If I have excess stock, can I use up the banned products?

Banned products can no longer be sold or given away following 1 October 2022.

If businesses have excess stock, there are a few options:

- existing stocks of these banned items can be used internally by the businesses themselves after 1 October, for example for food storage or food preparation, but it will not be legal to sell or give them to customers or any other person
- contact industry bodies or local recyclers to determine whether their products can be recycled onshore. For some clean unused items there may be recycling solutions. A list of New Zealand recyclers can be found here: [Recyclers | Plastics New Zealand](#).
- contact suppliers around taking it back.

The Ministry understands that businesses will need to change their practices to adjust to the new regulations. The Ministry encourages voluntary compliance and will use discretion when responding to any breaches of the regulations. In the first instance our preference is to take an educational approach and offer advice to help businesses understand their responsibilities.

These phase-outs will help us move away from low-value products that cannot be reused or recycled (and must be sent to landfill at a cost), toward a more circular economy where we use higher-value products that can remain in use.

## Will there be any more plastic bans?

Government is phasing out a range of plastics over the next three years.

**Phasing out problem plastics in Aotearoa**  
Te whakamoe i ngā kirihou whakapōraruru

Plastics waste is one of our generation's greatest environmental challenges – regularly ending up in landfills or the ocean.

To support Aotearoa's move towards a low-emissions, low-waste economy, we're phasing out these plastics over the next four years.

**Ministry for the Environment**  
Mātauranga Mō Te Taiao

**Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa**  
New Zealand Government

| Phase                 | Plastics to be phased out  |
|-----------------------|--|
| <b>1 October 2022</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PVC food trays and containers*</li> <li>Polystyrene takeaway food and drink packaging</li> <li>Expanded polystyrene food and drink packaging</li> <li>Plastic with pro-degradant additives, eg, oxo and photo-degradable plastics</li> <li>Plastic drink stirrers</li> <li>Plastic stemmed cotton buds</li> </ul> |
| <b>Mid 2023</b>       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Single-use: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plastic produce bags</li> <li>Plastic plates, bowls and cutlery</li> <li>Plastic straws*</li> <li>Plastic produce labels**</li> </ul> </li> </ul>  |
| <b>Mid 2025</b>       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All other PVC and polystyrene food and drink packaging</li> </ul>   |

\* Plastic straws will be available for disabled people and medical use  
\*\* See the Ministry's website for further information on scope

**For more information, visit <https://environment.govt.nz/waste/plastic-phase-out/>**  
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**He taiao tōnui mō ngā reanga katoa – a flourishing environment for every generation.**

## When are the next plastic bans coming into force? What items are included?

The next plastic phase-outs are expected to come into force in July 2023 – tranche 2, and in July 2025 – tranche 3. Items included in these tranches are shown below.

| Tranche   | Target date | Items included   |
|-----------|-------------|--|
| Tranche 2 | July 2023   | Single-use plastic: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• produce bags</li><li>• tableware (plates/bowls/cutlery)</li><li>• straws<sup>1</sup></li><li>• non-home compostable produce labels<sup>2</sup></li></ul> |
| Tranche 3 | July 2025   | All other PVC and polystyrene food and beverage packaging eg, single-serve yoghurt pottles, PVC cling wrap.  |

Links:

[Phasing out hard-to-recycle and single use plastics](#)

[Guidance on the 1 October 2022 plastic phase outs](#)

[National Plastics Action Plan](#)

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<sup>1</sup> Plastic straws will be available for people with disabilities and for medical use.

<sup>2</sup> There will be some exemptions for produce labels in the short term.