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Pollution is the problem, not plastic

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South Africa and many other countries around the world are calling for a [ban on plastic products](https://www.plasticsinfo.co.za/2019/07/19/plasticfreejuly-and-what-it-means-to-plastics-sa/) [https://www.plasticsinfo.co.za/2019/07/19/plasticfreejuly-and-what-it-means-to-plastics-sa/]. However, this is not the best solution for the global pollution crisis; a complex problem that requires rational thought and deep-rooted changes in the way society functions.

Banning plastic bags is an emotional reaction to the problem of plastic pollution. The supporters of this ban may have good intentions, but they do

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lies with our waste disposal practices, such as illegal dumping and littering. These are the major causes of plastic pollution in the environment. "To win the war on plastic pollution, every role-player in the plastics industry needs to confront some hard truths. This includes us as the producers of plastics, but it also includes government and consumers," says Plastics SA executive director Anton Hanekom.

Plastic pollution is the result of poor waste disposal practices

South Africa has some of the highest plastic recycling rates in the world. In 2018, we collected and recycled over 46% of our plastic waste – a 12% increase from the previous year. Our recycling facilities are able to process a vast amount of plastic and keep these products out of landfills, but the industry's efforts alone cannot win the war on pollution.

Proper disposal of plastic products will go a long way to boost recycling rates and keep these materials out of the environment. Consumers must make the effort to put their plastic refuse in a recycling bin and avoid littering at all costs. The government can also help to improve waste collection infrastructure and recycling facilities.

The funds are already available to the government in the form of the [plastic bag levy](https://www.plasticsinfo.co.za/2019/07/19/tax-on-single-use-plastics-is-not-the-best-solution/) [https://www.plasticsinfo.co.za/2019/07/19/tax-on-single-use-plastics-is-not-the-best-solution/] that was introduced in 2003. It currently stands at 12 cents for every plastic bag sold. By using this levy solely for the development of better recycling facilities and consumer education campaigns, the national government can unlock hundreds of millions of rands.

Plastic is a vital material for modern society

every single day for basic tasks, sometimes without even being aware of it. While imagining a world without plastic pollution may be a novel idea, the fact is that we cannot live without plastic.

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If disposed of correctly, plastic can be a more sustainable solution than its 'environmentally-friendly' alternatives, such as cotton. A recent study by Denmark's Ministry of Environment and Food reveals that many of these alternative materials actually have a bigger negative impact on the environment than plastic.

The study suggests that organic cotton shopping bags would need to be reused 7100 times in order to have the same environmental impact as a plastic shopping bag. This is because producing plastic bags is far cheaper, more energy-efficient and results in less carbon dioxide being released into the atmosphere. If we can curb pollution, we can save the environment and retain our dependence on plastic products for daily living.

"In the coming weeks and months, we, as the plastics industry, will embark on a sustained campaign to persuade government and citizens to join us in the war on plastic pollution. We support President Cyril Ramaphosa's quest to clean up South Africa, but it can only happen if there is a recycling revolution in this country," Hanekom exclaims.

"A rational conversation about plastic pollution recognises the positive attributes of plastic and focuses on how to manage plastic waste. To win this fight, we need to build strong collaborative and meaningful partnerships. Government, industry and the consumer need to work together," concludes Hanekom.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yttc36PNtvA>

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Clean-up and

Recycle SA Week takes place mid-September

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Keeping our

environment clean is a collective responsibility

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SA Landscape to integrate Biodegradable and Compostable packaging released

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Tax on single-use plastics is not the best solution

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Biodegradable plastics: blessing or a curse?

Biodegradable plastics: blessing or a curse?



Plastic packaging type 4 – PE-LD

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