

Europe to ban some single-use plastics

New obligations for industry as the region and other areas target the cause

by **Alex Scott and Alex Tullo**

MAY 31, 2018 | APPEARED IN **VOLUME 96, ISSUE 23**



Credit: Chris Jordan

A proposed European law aims to stop plastic from reaching seas and beaches, where it is often ingested by animals.

The European Commission has proposed a new law that bans or restricts the 10 single-use plastic products most often found on Europe's beaches and in its seas. The move comes amid efforts by the U.K. and by U.S. jurisdictions **such as California** to also limit single-use plastics.

The products on the EU's ban list include cotton swab shafts, cutlery, plates, straws, drink stirrers, and sticks for balloons. They will need to be made with more sustainable materials. Single-use plastic drink containers will be allowed only if their caps remain attached. Other products are subject to awareness-raising and cleanup measures. Together with fishing gear, the products targeted constitute 70% of all marine litter, the EC says.

Under the law, plastics producers will be obliged to help cover the cost of waste management and cleanup and to promote litter awareness. Producers of fishing gear, for example, will be required to pay for the collection and treatment of waste gathered by port authorities. The EC says it will provide industry with incentives to develop less-polluting alternatives.

"Europeans need to act together to tackle this problem, because plastic waste ends up in our air, our soil, our oceans and in our food," says Frans Timmermans, the EC's first vice president responsible for sustainable development. The EC is pushing to approve the measures by May 2019.

MOST POPULAR IN ENVIRONMENT

COVID-19 lockdowns had strange effects on air pollution across the globe

3 PFAS disposal technologies are more promising, US EPA says

Plastic has a problem; is chemical recycling the solution?

As nuclear waste piles up, scientists seek the best long-term storage solutions

Industrial ammonia production emits more CO₂ than any other chemical-making reaction. Chemists want to change that

The chemical reactions taking place in your swimming pool

PlasticsEurope, Europe’s leading plastics industry association, hit back at the proposal. “Plastic product bans are not the solution,” it says. The association is urging the EC “not to take shortcuts” and warns that alternatives to plastics may not be more sustainable. Rather than plastics, PlasticsEurope blames the problem on a lack of waste management infrastructure and “inappropriate littering behavior.”

But the proposed legislation was welcomed by environmental organizations, including the European Environment Bureau, a network of groups. “There is no reason why we shouldn’t ban unnecessary single-use plastic items when durable and toxic-free alternatives already exist,” says Stéphane Ardit, the group’s products and waste policy manager.

Biobased plastics producers could benefit from the proposed law. “Bioplastics can offer sustainable and safe alternatives for some of these identified products,” says François de Bie, chair of European Bioplastics, an industry association. However, the proposed law remains vague regarding the use of alternatives, he says.

	ITEM	ACTION
	Balloon sticks	Ban
	Cutlery, plates & straws	
	Cotton swab sticks	
	Drink bottles	Allowed only if caps remain attached
	Drink cups	Reduce use
	Food containers	
	Cigarette butts	Awareness, cleanup efforts
	Bags	
	Snack bags & wrappers	
	Wet wipes & sanitary items	

Less litter
An EU proposal would ban or limit single-use plastics in a bid to reduce pollution.
Source: European Commission

ADVERTISEMENT

MOST POPULAR IN ENVIRONMENT

- COVID-19 lockdowns had strange effects on air pollution across the globe
- 3 PFAS disposal technologies are more promising, US EPA says
- Plastic has a problem; is chemical recycling the solution?
- As nuclear waste piles up, scientists seek the best long-term storage solutions
- Industrial ammonia production emits more CO₂ than any other chemical-making reaction. Chemists want to change that
- The chemical reactions taking place in your swimming pool

Sign up for C&EN's must-read weekly newsletter

Email Address

Subscribe »

Contact us to opt out anytime

The move to control plastic litter follows the **January unveiling** of the first Europe-wide strategy for managing the region’s growing plastic waste problem. It stipulates that all plastic packaging must be recyclable by 2030. Since then countries around the world have announced plastic recycling overhauls and new laws.

In the U.S., prohibitions on plastics have been rolled out on the state and local, rather than the federal, levels, with California generally leading the way. **Following a referendum**, the state banned plastic shopping bags in 2016. Laws introduced in the state’s legislature would ban restaurants from providing drinking straws except by customer request, require beverage container caps to be tethered, and require labels on clothing made mostly from synthetic fibers to warn that they shed microfibers when washed.

ADVERTISEMENT

New York City has made on-again, off-again attempts to ban plastic bags and polystyrene foam containers. Last week, the city council introduced a bill to ban plastic straws and stirrers.

ADVERTISEMENT

Chemical & Engineering News

ISSN 0009-2347

Copyright © 2020 American Chemical Society

YOU MIGHT ALSO LIKE...



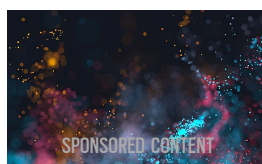
New Jersey bans plastic and paper bags as of 2022



India to ban single-use plastics

ITEM	ACTION
Balloon sticks	Ban
Cutlery, plates & straws	

EU adopts plastics ban



Optimize Laboratory Performance with ICP-OES & ICP-MS

by PerkinElmer

MOST POPULAR IN ENVIRONMENT

COVID-19 lockdowns had strange effect on air pollution across the globe

3 PFAS disposal technologies are more promising, US EPA says

Plastic has a problem; is chemical recycling the solution?

As nuclear waste piles up, scientists seek the best long-term storage solutions

Industrial ammonia production emits more CO₂ than any other chemical-making reaction. Chemists want to change that

The chemical reactions taking place in your swimming pool

LEAVE A COMMENT

Name

Email*

Comments by first-time contributors will be reviewed prior to appearing on the site. This review is done by humans and not always immediately. You may be laudatory or critical, but please stay on topic and be respectful of the author and your fellow readers. We reserve the right to remove any comments that are profane, obscene, abusive, or otherwise inappropriate. Email addresses are required so that we can verify you are not a robot overlord and in case we need to contact you about your comment privately. They will not appear on the site.

Submit

*Required to comment

