



Elimination Manual for Single-use Plastics

A guide to removing problematic and unnecessary plastics for
manufacturers, brands, hospitality, tourism, and consumers



Our Clarion Call:



REFUSE

Avoid accepting or using single-use plastics (SUPs) that are unnecessary or have sustainable alternatives.

REDUCE

Minimise the consumption of SUPs by choosing products with less or no plastic packaging.

REPLACE

Switch to sustainable, reusable, or compostable alternatives instead SUPs items.

REUSE

Extend the lifespan of products by using them multiple times instead of disposing of them after a single use.

REFILL

Choose refillable packaging or systems that allow repeated use without generating new plastic waste.



Background

Plastic pollution is one of the most severe threats to the planet's health, with wide-ranging impacts on ecosystems, biodiversity, and human well-being. SUPs are a major driver of this crisis, stemming largely from unsustainable business practices that prioritise convenience and low-cost production over environmental responsibility¹.

Many companies continue to rely heavily on non-recyclable or hard-to-recover plastic packaging instead of adopting materials with high recoverability or circular design principles². This systemic dependence perpetuates a linear “take-make-dispose” model that floods markets and the environment with disposable plastics.

According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) *Global Plastics Outlook: Policy Scenarios to 2060*, global plastics use is projected to almost triple from 460 million tonnes in 2019 to 1,231 million tonnes by 2060, while plastic waste generation is

expected to rise from 353 million tonnes to 1,014 million tonnes, highlighting the urgent need for strong Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) measures to address the growing plastic pollution crisis³. An estimated 37,000 tonnes of plastic leak into the ocean annually, and 67% of that leakage comes from urban centres⁴ where waste management systems are often inadequate. At the same time, poor consumer practices such as lack of waste segregation at source, improper disposal, and failure to use designated collection points worsen the situation by increasing the volume of plastics that end up in open dumps, drains, and waterways.

1 Rylander, Y., & Gardner, T. (2023, February 6). *More single-use plastic waste than ever before*. Stockholm Environment Institute.

2 United Nations Development Programme. (2024). *Combating plastic pollution for sustainable development: A snapshot of UNDP's work in 12 countries*. New York, NY: UNDP.

3 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2022). *Global Plastics Outlook: Policy Scenarios to 2060*. OECD Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1787/aa1edf33-en>

4 Griffin, M., & Karasik, R. (2022, February). *Plastic pollution policy country profile: Kenya* (NI PB 22-06). Duke University, Nicholas Institute for Environmental Policy Solutions.

Once in the environment, SUPs clog drainage systems, exacerbate urban flooding, and degrade into microplastics that contaminate soil and water. These particles absorb and release toxic chemicals, threaten aquatic and terrestrial life through ingestion and entanglement, and enter the human food chain, posing health risks. Beyond environmental harm, plastic pollution also leads to economic losses, particularly in sectors such as fisheries, agriculture, and tourism. Collectively, these impacts underscore the urgent need for both systemic change in production and packaging practices, and a shift in consumer behaviour toward responsible waste management.

Phasing out problematic and unnecessary SUP packaging is essential to shift our economy and communities away from disposable plastics toward more durable, reusable, and recyclable packaging solutions. Addressing these problematic items will not only reduce packaging consumption, litter, and waste but also improve the economics of recycling, create employment opportunities, and increase the use of recycled content in packaging. Such measures are critical to driving Kenya's transition toward a circular economy.

In line with this vision, the Kenya Plastics Pact (KPP) has initiated several efforts to accelerate packaging circularity across value chains. These include the development of *Design Guidelines for the Recyclability of PET and HDPE Bottles*⁵, aimed at helping manufacturers and brand owners align packaging with circular design principles. KPP has also introduced a *Priority List for The Elimination of Problematic and Unnecessary Plastic Items*⁶, guiding businesses toward phasing out materials that hinder recycling or have viable alternatives. Furthermore, the *#LetsBeClear Challenge* encourages companies to shift from coloured to clear PET bottles, which are easier to recycle and have higher market value.

Complementing these initiatives, policy amendments that clearly define the design, durability, and recyclability requirements for plastic packaging can further incentivize product reuse and enhance recycling potential. Effective implementation, however, requires collaboration across the entire value chain from manufacturers and brand owners to retailers, consumers, and policymakers to ensure a coordinated and lasting transition toward sustainable packaging systems.



⁵ <https://kpp.or.ke/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/KENYA-PLASTICS-PACT-ROADMAP-TO-2030-1.pdf>

⁶ <https://kpp.or.ke/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/KPP-TARGET-1-PRIORITY-LIST-1.pdf>

Circular Economy Interventions for SUPs Elimination

BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY INTERVENTION

Businesses and industries play a critical role in driving the transition away from SUPs toward sustainable production and consumption models. The shift requires innovation, collaboration, and a commitment to circular economy principles that prioritise reduction, reuse, and recycling. Key areas of intervention include:

1. SUSTAINABLE ALTERNATIVES:

Transition from SUPs to environmentally friendly and durable alternatives such as bamboo, glass, stainless steel, or compostable materials. Businesses can redesign products and packaging to prioritise reusability and recyclability while ensuring product safety and consumer convenience. Local sourcing of sustainable materials can also stimulate green value chains and create new job opportunities.

2. RECYCLED CONTENT:

Adopt packaging materials that incorporate a high percentage of recycled content to reduce dependence on virgin plastics. Integrating recycled PET (rPET) or HDPE (rHDPE) into packaging supports a circular economy, lowers production costs over time, and helps meet Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) requirements and sustainability targets.

3. REFILL AND REUSE SYSTEMS:

Establish refill and reuse models, such as in-store dispensing machines or bulk purchasing systems, and encourage customers to bring their own refillable containers. Providing reusable

packaging options like refillable bottles, jars, or glass containers can significantly cut down SUPs packaging waste. Partnerships with retailers can help scale up these systems nationally.

4. COMMUNICATION AND AWARENESS:

Develop engaging, easy-to-understand, and visually appealing communication campaigns to promote the reduction of SUPs. Use catchy hashtags and social media challenges (e.g., *#RefillRevolution*, *#LetsBeClear*, *#PlasticFreeKenya*) to raise awareness and influence consumer behaviour. Consistent messaging across businesses strengthens public understanding and participation in sustainable practices.

5. INCENTIVES AND INNOVATION:

Introduce incentives for both consumers and businesses to encourage reuse and refill practices. These may include loyalty points, discounts, or deposit-return systems for reusable packaging. At the industry level, governments and business associations can provide tax benefits, recognition awards, or green financing to support circular innovations and the elimination of problematic plastics.

INDIVIDUAL INTERVENTIONS

1. REFUSE:

Say no to SUPs like straws, cutlery, and bags. Choose reusable or sustainable options instead.

2. REDUCE:

Buy only what you need and pick products with little or no plastic packaging. Go for loose or bulk items.

3. REUSE:

Carry your own refillable bottle, coffee cup, or shopping bag, small habits make a big difference.

4. RECYCLE:

Sort and dispose of plastics correctly to ensure they reach recycling plants, not landfills or rivers.

5. REMIND:

Spread the word! Encourage friends, family, and businesses to cut plastic use and adopt sustainable practices.



NON-PACKAGING PLASTICS

Disposable plastics are cost-effective and convenient in the short term; however, the environmental impacts are severe and long-lasting. The non-biodegradable nature of

disposable plastics causes accumulation in natural ecosystems and landfills, where the materials gradually fragment into harmful microplastics that persist for decades.

FACTS ABOUT SINGLE-USE PLASTICS (NON-PACKAGING)

- Plastics release harmful chemicals and microfragments that contaminate food, water, and soil.
- Microplastics accumulate in the human body, posing potential health risks.
- Wildlife and plants are harmed through ingestion, entanglement, and habitat disruption.
- Plastics pollute rivers, oceans, and landscapes, and persist for decades or even centuries.
- Their production and disposal emit greenhouse gases, contributing to climate change.
- Small items like straws and stirrers are easily lost to the environment and hard to recover.
- Kenya has banned single-use plastics in protected natural areas to safeguard ecosystems.

DISPOSABLE PLASTIC CUTLERY (REPLACE, REUSE)

SUP cutlery including spoons, forks, and knives are among the most problematic and unnecessary plastic items due to their short lifespan and limited recyclability. These items are lightweight, often contaminated with food waste, and rarely recovered through recycling systems.

- **Refuse and Eliminate:** Disposable plastic cutlery should be avoided and gradually phased out as part of efforts to eliminate problematic SUPs.

- **Replace:** Viable and widely available alternatives can replace plastic cutlery, such as those made from wood, bamboo, stainless steel, silver, glass, aluminium, or sugarcane bagasse. These materials are more durable, reusable, and environmentally friendly.
- **Reuse:** Encouraging the use of reusable cutlery sets at workplaces, events, and food outlets can significantly reduce plastic waste. Businesses can also promote “bring your own cutlery” initiatives to encourage sustainable consumer habits.

DISPOSABLE PLASTIC CUPS, PLATES AND BOWLS (REPLACE, REUSE, REFILL)

Disposable plastic cups, plates, and bowls are considered problematic and unnecessary due to their short lifespan, high volume of waste generation, and the availability of sustainable alternatives.

- **Replace:** These items can be replaced with eco-friendly options such as *paper, bamboo, bagasse, palm leaves, rice husk, or wheat bran*. Businesses and event organizers can also shift to durable materials like *glass, ceramic, or stainless steel*, which can be reused multiple times.
- **Reuse:** Consumers and food outlets are encouraged to adopt reusable dishware systems and promote the use of long-lasting plastics made from polyethylene (PE), HDPE, low-density polyethylene (LDPE), and polypropylene (PP), which are more durable and recyclable.
- **Refill and Incentivise:** Cafes and restaurants can offer discounts or loyalty incentives to customers who bring their own refillable coffee cups or food containers, helping to normalise sustainable consumption habits.



PLASTIC STRAWS (REPLACE, REFUSE, REUSE)

- They are problematic and unnecessary, better alternatives exist.
- Replace with biodegradable or compostable options such as *paper*, *bamboo*, or *corn-starch* straws.
- Choose reusable straws made from *stainless steel*, *glass*, or *silicone*.
- Refuse-say no to plastic and *Just SIP IT!*



PLASTIC STIRRERS

- These items create unnecessary waste and have viable alternatives.
- Switch to biodegradable or compostable options such as *paper*, *bamboo*, *palm leaf*, or *cardboard*.
- Adopt reusable choices like *stainless steel*, *glass*, or *durable ceramics* for long-term use.



PLASTIC COTTON BUD STICKS

- Plastic cotton buds are problematic and unnecessary, as they contribute significantly to litter in waterways and marine pollution.
- They can be easily replaced with biodegradable alternatives made from *paper*, *bamboo*, *wood*, or *cardboard*.
- Reusable cotton swabs made from silicone or other washable materials offer a long-lasting, zero-waste option.



PLASTIC PACKAGING ITEMS

Plastic packaging plays a vital role in preserving and transporting goods but remains one of the largest contributors to plastic pollution in Kenya. Much of this packaging is designed for single use, leading to high volumes of waste that are difficult

to recycle or manage responsibly. Addressing plastic packaging waste is essential to protect the environment, promote circularity, and encourage businesses and consumers to adopt sustainable alternatives.

FACTS ABOUT PACKAGING PLASTICS IN KENYA

- PVC (Polyvinyl Chloride) and EPS (Expanded Polystyrene) are currently not recycled in Kenya due to the absence of appropriate recycling infrastructure.
- Alternatives exist, including biodegradable, compostable, or paper-based packaging that can replace non-recyclable plastics.
- Certain plastics, such as PETG and PVC, contaminate recycling streams e.g., PVC shrink sleeves on PET bottles lower the recyclability of otherwise recoverable plastics.
- Plastic packaging can leach harmful chemicals and microplastics into food, water, and soil, posing serious health risks to humans.
- Microplastics accumulate in ecosystems and living organisms, threatening biodiversity and food safety.
- The production and disposal of plastics contribute to greenhouse gas emissions, intensifying climate change.
- Small items, such as sweet wrappers and sachets, often escape into nature and are difficult to collect or recycle.
- Plastic pollution degrades rivers, oceans, and landscapes, harming wildlife and impacting tourism, agriculture, and fisheries.
- Most plastic packaging takes decades or even centuries to break down, leading to long-term accumulation in landfills and the environment.
- The use of SUPs is already banned in protected natural areas in Kenya to safeguard biodiversity and natural habitats.



PET BOTTLES

- Adopt *refillable dispensing systems* for products such as soap, lotion, and shampoo in hotels to minimize SUPs bottles.
- Serve drinking water in *glass bottles, jugs, or dispensers* instead of disposable plastic bottles to reduce plastic waste in hospitality settings.
- Encourage customers to bring their *own refillable bottles or coffee cups* by offering *small incentives or discounts*.
- Provide *reusable water bottles* for guests during safaris, nature walks, and excursions, reducing reliance on disposable plastics.
- Install *bulk dispensing stations* for commonly used products to eliminate pre-packaged plastic containers and encourage reuse.
- *Design packaging for recyclability* by avoiding coloured plastics, adhesives, and glues, which contaminate recycling streams, hinder material separation, and lower the quality and value of recycled products.



PETG AND PVC SHRINK SLEEVES

- Replace traditional labels with *in-moulded labels or direct printing* to improve recyclability and reduce material waste.
- *Redesign labels using eco-friendly adhesives*, such as water-soluble or easily removable options, to ensure compatibility with recycling processes.
- *Use labels made from sustainable materials*, including recycled content, renewable resources, or biodegradable and compostable substrates.
- *Adopt water-based inks and low-impact printing methods* to minimize harmful emissions and environmental impact during production.



ALL POLYSTYRENE (PS) PACKAGING

- Refuse all polystyrene (PS) packaging, as it is non-recyclable in Kenya and poses major environmental and health risks.
- Replace PS materials with *plant-based or biodegradable alternatives* such as cornstarch, moulded paper pulp, wool-based insulation, or corrugated cardboard.
- Adopt *reusable options*, including glass containers and durable plastic alternatives like HDPE, to promote circularity and long-term use.



SECONDARY PLASTIC CLING FILM (ON TAKEAWAY PACKAGING)

- Adopt reusable options such as cloth bags, beeswax wraps, reusable glass jars, or stainless-steel containers to replace single-use plastic wraps and packaging.
- Use glass or stainless-steel jars and containers for storage and food service to reduce plastic waste and promote long-term use.
- Switch to reusable cloth bags for shopping, packaging, and transport to minimize disposable plastic bag consumption.
- Choose compostable cling films made from plant-based or biodegradable materials, which offer similar functionality without long-term environmental harm.
- Opt for compostable or biodegradable fibre boxes and clamshells, made from sugarcane bagasse, wheat bran, or palm leaves, as sustainable alternatives for food packaging.



CONSUMER PLASTIC MULTI-WRAP AROUND CANS, TINS, BOTTLES, AND CARTONS, FOR MULTI-SALES.

- Adopt sustainable alternatives to replace plastic multi-wraps used around cans, tins, bottles, and cartons for multi-pack sales. Options include paper-based wraps, cardboard sleeves, or biodegradable films.
- Use reusable crates made from durable materials such as HDPE, Polypropylene (PP), or wood, which can be returned, cleaned, and reused multiple times.
- Encourage single-item purchases where possible just pick it in single form to reduce unnecessary secondary packaging and promote more sustainable consumption habits.



Eliminations List Summary

SINGLE USE PLASTICS ITEM	CE STRATEGY FOR SINGLE USE PLASTICS ELIMINATION
None Packaging	
Single use plastics straws	Refuse; Eliminate with sustainable alternatives; Replace with paper, metal, or bamboo straws
Single use plastic cutlery	Refuse; Eliminate; Replace with wooden or reusable alternatives
Disposable cups	Reduce; Replace with reusable or biodegradable options
Disposable plates & Bowls	Replace; Reuse; Switch to compostable materials
Disposable stirrers	Replace; Reuse; Switch to compostable materials
Plastic cotton buds	Eliminate; Replace with paper-stem or bamboo alternatives
Packaging Items	
Single use water/juice bottles	Refuse; Reduce; Replace; Reuse; Design for recyclability and longer use (e.g., PET and HDPE guidelines).
Single use bottle for soap, shampoo etc	Replace; Refill; Reuse through bulk dispensing or refill systems.
Secondary Plastic cling film on takeaway packaging.	Replace with compostable or reusable wrapping; Reuse; Refill where possible
Plastic multi-wrap around cans, tins, bottles, and cartons, for multi-sales.	Refuse; Replace with cardboard sleeves or reusable packaging; Opt for loose or unpackaged items instead

