

WAITROSE

& PARTNERS

COMMITMENT TO ELIMINATING UNNECESSARY PLASTIC

The impact of plastics on the environment is a serious concern for both our Partners and customers. Plastic serves several important functions in retail, including protecting products from damage in transit and helping preserve food for longer. However, we only want to use plastic when it is really needed and prevent it from entering the environment where it can cause damage to animals and ecosystems.

We have already reduced our packaging by almost 50% since 2009. We have taken important steps to eliminate unnecessary plastic for example by removing disposable coffee cups from our shops, eliminating microbeads from our products and innovating in alternatives to plastic, but we want to go further. This document sets out our commitments, progress and plans.

OUR COMMITMENTS

- We are determined to make all our own-brand packaging widely-recycled, reusable or home compostable. We will have identified solutions for all our packaging by 2020 and will meet our target by 2023.
- Transparency is important to drive progress in this area so we will disclose our plastic packaging data annually in tonnes and units.
- 70% of the plastic in our own-brand product packaging is already widely recyclable. We aim to increase this to 80% by 2020 and 100% by 2023.
- By the end of 2019 we will have removed black plastic from all our own-brand products.
- In 2019 we will pilot refillables in our shops and test even more loose produce ranges.
- In 2019 we will work further with our customers to determine which plastic packaging can be removed without decreasing quality and reducing shelf life to make sure that we don't increase food waste.
- We are replacing loose fruit and veg bags with home compostable alternatives by spring 2019 and will remove 5p single-use carrier bags by March 2019.
- We want to eliminate glitter from our own-brand cards, wraps, crackers, tags, flowers and plants. From 2020 all of these ranges will be either glitter-free or use an alternative.
- Building on the £1.5 million we have already donated to initiatives tackling plastic pollution, we are now putting forward a further £1 million in grants to fund projects targeting the prevention of plastic pollution and/or the impact it causes.

OUR CUSTOMERS CARE

Since Blue Planet II aired at the end of 2017, our customer services team has seen an 800% increase in questions about plastic.

We received 30,000 questions and posts about plastic on @waitrose twitter in 6 months.

In our shops customers are changing behaviours. In 2018 we have seen a 30% reduction in the use of fruit and veg bags when compared with the previous year.

OUR PLASTICS PLAN

We believe that recyclable plastic can play an important role in protecting the food that we sell to our customers. But we are committed to eliminating unnecessary plastic and we will achieve this aim in five steps.

1) PRODUCT PACKAGING

We are removing and re-designing our packaging.
We are also introducing alternatives to non-recyclable plastics.



2) PRODUCTS WE USE AND SELL

We are removing unnecessary plastic from the products that we sell and use as a business.



3) CUSTOMERS

We are working with customers to understand which plastics are unnecessary and trialling new ways of shopping.



4) SUPPLY CHAIN

We are working with our suppliers to understand where unnecessary plastic is used and reduce it.



5) PLASTIC POLLUTION & HEALTHY OCEANS

We are supporting organisations that are tackling plastic pollution through innovation and conservation.



PRODUCT PACKAGING

One of our key packaging principles is to reduce packaging where it is not needed and simplify it where it is. Our target is for all our own-brand packaging to be widely-recycled, reusable or home compostable by 2023 and we will have identified solutions by 2020.

We believe in being transparent about the amount of plastic we are putting onto the market. In 2017 our own-brand product packaging included 18,400 tonnes of plastic which equates to 1.4 billion units. 70% of this packaging (in tonnes) is widely recyclable and we aim to increase this to 80% by 2020 and 100% by 2023.

UNNECESSARY & PROBLEM PLASTICS

We specify that none of our own-brand packaging contains these problem plastics: EPS, PVC or PLA. Polystyrene is used in some products like yoghurt pots which account for 29 tonnes of our total plastic and we want to remove this by 2020.

We want to eliminate plastic laminated board or paper which is used for products like sandwiches by 2021 and complex laminates like crisp packets by 2023.

By the end of 2019 we will have removed black plastic, which is difficult to recycle, from all our own-brand products. By the end of 2018 we will have achieved this in meat, fish and poultry, and fruit and veg. This amounts to a reduction of 1,300 tonnes of black plastic which means we are more than half-way there.

While removing black plastic we have also taken the opportunity to reduce the amount of plastic in many lines by removing trays from fruit and veg like apples, broccoli and pak choi. Where a tray is needed to protect delicate fruit and veg we have started to move to card alternatives.

However this is just the start. We want to work with our customers to understand which plastic packaging truly is unnecessary without impacting the freshness and the quality.

PACKAGING INNOVATION

We launched sandwich wrappers that are easier to recycle as the cardboard can be separated from the plastic film more easily.

Duchy tomatoes are in packaging made from tomato leaf and recycled paper. This will save 3.5 million plastic trays per year.

SINGLE-USE PLASTIC

The term single-use is widely used, but definitions vary. For us it means any product or packaging that is designed to be used only once. We are committed to removing any unnecessary single-use plastic, but it's worth noting that widely-recycled plastic can play an important role in reducing food waste by improving shelf life. By 2023 we will have eliminated any unnecessary plastic and in doing so we will have significantly reduced the number of products using single-use plastic packaging.

PRODUCTS WE USE AND SELL

We are committed to eliminating unnecessary plastic in the products that we use like carrier bags, coffee cups and on our counters and in the products that we sell like straws and cutlery.

PRODUCTS WE SELL

We have taken a strong stand in this area. We were the first supermarket to stop selling products containing microbeads and at the same time we switched our plastic stem cotton buds to paper.

This year we stopped selling packs of single-use plastic straws. In 2019 we will stop selling packs of single-use plastic cutlery.

We have also been working across the horticulture industry to find an alternative to black plastic plant pots and will be introducing a widely recyclable alternative in 2019.

Our next focus is glitter. There is roughly half a gram of glitter on a bunch of flowers. There are over 43,000 tiny particles in this small amount which can easily enter the environment. For Christmas 2018 75% of our own-brand cards, wraps, crackers and tags will be glitter-free and 50% of our flowers and plants. We will significantly improve on this for Christmas 2019. By 2020 we want all own-brand products in these ranges to either be glitter-free or use an alternative.

PRODUCTS WE USE

As well as in our packaging, we use plastics at our counters, in our carrier bags, in our cafes and for loose products like bread and fruit and veg.

We are replacing loose fruit and veg plastic bags with home compostable alternatives by spring 2019. These can be used as food caddy liners by customers. At the same time we will introduce a reusable bag for fruit and veg for customers to buy.

We have also committed to removing 5p single-use plastic carrier bags by March 2019 in all shops.

Since March 2018 our customers have been able to bring their own clean and lidded reusable containers to our counters to take home cold products. This has contributed to a reduction of 5 million deli counter bags since 2017.

Our next focus is eliminating unnecessary plastic at our counters and our cafes. We aim to achieve this by 2020.

INNOVATION IN OUR SHOPS

We are trialling alternative bread bags in our shops that are widely recyclable.

In 2019 we are replacing all plastic cutlery from our Food To Go and cafes with an FSC certified wood alternative. This amounts to 13 million items of plastic cutlery per year.

We are removing disposable coffee cups from our shops which amounts to 52 million coffee cups per year. We provide customers with a choice of reusable alternatives.

OUR CUSTOMERS AND SUPPLIERS

We want to work with our customers to understand which plastic packaging truly is unnecessary, without impacting on the freshness and the quality of the food.

We are also working with our suppliers to understand where most plastic is used through our supply chain and remove it where it can be avoided.

CUSTOMERS

Our customers want us to help them to reduce the amount of plastic that they use and in research we carried out in January 2018, over 85% said they wanted us to lead the way in reducing packaging or increasing recyclable packaging.

We have engaged with our customers on the topic of plastic through social media, signage in our shops and our publications including Waitrose Weekend.

In 2019 we are going to trial selling more fruit and veg loose. We are currently working out which products still need some protection to maintain their quality and avoid waste.

Some of the trials we have done so far with alternative packaging (or no packaging) have dramatically reduced the shelf life of products. One alternative packaging trial reduced shelf life from 3 days to just 6 hours!

We want to work with our customers to understand which products lend themselves to no packaging, which need more protection and which are suited to refills. All steps that we take in this area need to maintain the quality and freshness of our products.

SUPPLY CHAIN

In 2018 we signed up to the Global Ghost Gear Initiative which aims to protect marine life and minimise plastic pollution from abandoned fishing equipment. We will be working with stakeholders across the fishing industry to find solutions to lost and discarded fishing equipment.

We also shared our plans at our supplier and farmer conferences and asked them to work with us to address plastics through our supply chains.

PLASTIC POLLUTION & HEALTHY OCEANS

We want to tackle plastic pollution beyond our direct influence in our supply chains, products, shops and communities.

In 2017/2018 we have donated £1 million to the Marine Conservation Society and £500,000 to the Commonwealth Marine Plastics Research and Innovation Challenge Fund. We are stepping up our activity in this area to help to fast-track solutions for all.

£1 MILLION PLASTICS FUND

In early 2018, we launched an innovation challenge through JLAB, focusing entirely on plastic waste, calling on businesses with a deep knowledge and expertise of this issue to find creative concepts that could significantly reduce plastic waste for John Lewis & Partners and Waitrose & Partners. The result was an amazing collection of innovation and energy to make a difference.

The Waitrose & Partners Plastics Fund will build on the momentum from JLAB to address other key areas in the plastic life-cycle including education and changing societal behaviour to prevent the causes, as well as tackling the consequences and effects, of plastic pollution.

We are putting forward a further £1 million in total from the sale of 5p carrier bags.

We will be looking for initiatives that focus on plastics in one of the following areas:

- Social plastics - plastic recycling/circular economy linked to social impact
- Education campaigns - youth and children
- Consumer behaviour change - new ways of shopping
- Reduction, alternatives and re-use of plastics in food, agriculture and farming
- Impact, reduction and prevention of microplastics

JLAB

JLAB is the John Lewis Partnership's start-up acceleration hub.

In 2018 JLAB ran an innovation challenge to tackle plastic in our operations.

10 businesses were shortlisted with ideas on alternative packaging, chemical recycling, sustainable materials and plastic-free products.

CupClub™, an innovative returnable packaging service for drinks will now be trialled.