



世界自然基金會
香港分會

WWF-Hong Kong

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Chairman and Members of Panel on Environmental Affairs, Legislative Council

(c/o Clerk to Panel on Environmental Affairs)
Legislative Council Complex,
1 Legislative Council Road, Central, Hong Kong

22 January 2021
(By post and e-mail)

Dear Sir/Madam,

**Re: Panel on Environmental Affairs Meeting on 22 January 2021, agenda item
#IV “Waste Management Strategies for Hong Kong”**

To meet the United Nation’s Sustainable Development Goals Target 12.5 ‘By 2030, substantially reduce waste generation through prevention, reduction, recycling and reuse’, WWF-Hong Kong (WWF) believes that it is necessary to redesign the plastic production waste cycle and ‘close the loop’ through improved product design, recovery, recycling, and reuse. With our vision of *No Plastic in Nature by 2030* (or earlier), we have the following Plastic SMART recommendations to manage waste plastics:

1. Establish a roadmap by 2021 to phase out all single-use plastic tableware by 2025 or earlier

WWF appreciates that EPD commenced a study on the feasibility, scope, and mechanism of regulating disposable plastic tableware. A survey conducted by WWF published in 2019¹ revealed that roughly 80% of respondents support regulation of single-use plastic tableware in the F&B industry, that 76% of respondents have previously refused single-use plastics when purchasing take-away, and that over 60% of respondents have previously avoided restaurants that use disposable plastic tableware. The results show growing support in Hong Kong for addressing the disposable plastics crisis and preserving the ecological health of our marine environment. It is time for the government to formulate a workable timeline for the F&B industry to phase-out single-use plastics by 2025 or earlier and work with the industry to ensure a smooth transition that is a win-win for all parties, such as establishing an aid fund for the F&B industry to roll out incentive schemes for customers to bring their own cutlery and containers.

¹ https://www.wwf.org.hk/en/news/press_release/?22540/WWF

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2. Ban Expanded Polystyrene (EPS) tableware and drinking straws by 2022

During 2014-2016, WWF conducted a citizen science survey to study Hong Kong's marine litter problem². Survey results show that the top types of litter collected were plastics, such as EPS fragments and plastic straws. Due to their light weight and neutral or positive buoyancy, many types of disposable plastic float and spread widely across the sea. EPS containers break apart easily into tiny pieces that are difficult to remove from the marine environment. WWF advocates that all EPS tableware and plastic drinking straws are banned by 2022.

3. Develop a regulated Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) system for plastic packaging and tableware by 2025 or earlier

We note that government engaged a consultant to conduct a feasibility study on introducing a Producer Responsibility Scheme on plastic beverage containers and will consult the public on the detailed proposal. As mentioned in point 2 above, WWF's survey has found that the top ten types of marine litter collected were plastics, including disposable plastic packaging and tableware. WWF suggests that the government develops a regulated EPR system for plastic packaging, as well as disposable tableware.

4. Regulate plastic labelling and single-use biodegradable tableware (e.g. PLA)

To reduce our plastic footprint, WWF is advocating for new policy standards, new incentives for industry, and new models of innovation for plastic avoidance, use, reuse, and waste management. Currently, it is difficult to identify types of plastics without a proper regulated plastic labelling policy. WWF suggests a mandatory labelling policy on all plastic items, such as single-use tableware and packaging, to facilitate proper recycling.

Furthermore, there are new types of 'biodegradable' plastics on the market, such as PLA. However, to biodegrade, these types of materials required a specific physical environment, with a specific temperature and humidity level, meaning that these materials will not biodegrade if they are leaked to a natural environment that does not meet these specific requirements. WWF suggests the government to regulate this type of biodegradable plastic as it likely poses the same environmental threats as single-use plastic.

5. Set a high levy on single-use shopping bags of any material, with minimal exemptions by 2022

Hong Kong should strive to remove single-use plastic shopping bags from our economy in the near future. Many other cities and countries around the world have successfully done so in an economical and cost-effective way. Their environment has improved as a result. The plastic shopping bag disposal rate has seen an increasing trend since 2015,

²https://d3q9070b7kewus.cloudfront.net/downloads/coastalwatchreport_en_compressed.pdf

despite the HKD0.5 levy scheme. This shows that the existing levy is becoming less effective since its launch. Many shops provide non-plastic alternatives, such as paper bags free of charge, WWF suggests that any type of single-use shopping bags should be levied to encourage a “bring your own bag” culture. WWF advocates the government to set a high levy on single-use shopping bags of any materials, with minimal exemptions by 2022.

We believe that the above recommendations are necessary if Hong Kong is to achieve the goal of *No Plastic in Nature by 2030* or earlier. We hope to see Hong Kong transform into Asia’s most sustainable and liveable city which we can all be proud of.

Yours faithfully,



David Olson, Ph.D.
Director of Conservation
WWF-Hong Kong

c.c. Secretary for the Environment, Wong Kam-sing, GBS, JP