



Plastic Bag Ban

Factsheet

PLASTIC BAG BAN - FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

The New Zealand government recently passed new waste minimisation regulations which will forbid retailers from providing or selling single-use plastic bags. *This ban will come into force on 1 July 2019.*

From grocery stores and fashion outlets to dairies and fast food chains, the ban will affect all retailers that currently use some form of lightweight plastic shopping bags.

This fact sheet is designed to help retailers comply with the new regulations, find alternative bag solutions, manage customer expectations and maximise the benefits for their business.

Brought to you by



Find out more at
greenbusinessHQ.com/plasticban
[#zerowaste](#) [#plasticbagban](#) [#bringyourownbag](#)

ABOUT THE BAN

Q. What type of bags are banned?

The ban applies to all new or unused plastic shopping bags with carrying handles that are less than 70 microns thick and are provided for the purpose of distributing sold goods.

The ban includes plastic shopping bags that are made from bio-based materials like starch and those that are designed to be degradable, biodegradable or oxo-degradable.

Under these regulations, retailers may not provide plastic shopping bags to their customers for the purposes of taking goods from the store or delivering goods outside of the store.

These regulations apply whether the bags and/or goods are being sold or given away for free.

Q. Why are biodegradable bags being banned?

While there has been considerable research into biodegradable plastics, studies suggest that biodegradable plastic bags do not break down any faster when ingested by birds and other species than a 'normal' petrochemical plastic bag. They can, therefore, have the same devastating impact as plastic bags on our marine and bird life. These bags are also single-use and New Zealand doesn't have the national infrastructure for composting them yet. Multi-use options like reusable bags use resources much more efficiently over time.

Q. Which bags are still allowed?

The ban does not apply to:

- long-life reusable bags made of heavier plastic (>70 microns)
- produce bags that are integral to a product's packaging (such as a bread bag)
- kitchen tidy or bin liner bags
- hessian bags
- fabric bags made of lightweight nylon, cotton, recycled fabric or jute

Shoppers are also free to bring their own bags of any kind.

Q. Does the ban apply to my business?

The short answer: Probably.

The ban applies to all retailers in New Zealand regardless of type or size.

Under these regulations, a "retailer" is a person engaged in business in New Zealand that includes the sale of goods for money. This includes any kind of shop. For example, dairies, cafes, takeaway foods, petrol stations,

clothing shops, and hardware shops and garden centres will all be affected by the ban.

The ban also applies to online businesses and not-for-profit organisations that sell goods in New Zealand.

Q. Why do we need a ban?

New Zealand uses hundreds of millions of single-use plastic shopping bags a year and most of those end up in a landfill or as litter in our waterways, coasts and oceans. It takes about 500 years for these bags to decompose and even then, they can only break down into micro-plastics which are toxic for New Zealand's plants, animals and ultimately us.

It is estimated that 100,000 marine animals are killed annually by single-use plastic bags alone and that plastic bags currently make up 8.2% of litter along New Zealand coastlines.

These new regulations seek to drastically reduce those numbers to make New Zealand a cleaner & safer home for us all.

The ban is a great opportunity for businesses to offer new, sustainable options to their customers and take a leadership role in creating a greener future for New Zealand.

Q. When will the ban come into effect?

The ban comes into effect on 1 July 2019.

This allows for a phase-out period for retailers to use up their existing stock before the regulations take effect.

If you have unused bags on 1 July we recommend that you recycle them. Contact your local waste provider about this service.

Q. What are the consequences of using plastic bags after 1 July?

Breaking these new regulations is an offence that could result in a fine of up to \$100,000 on conviction. Fines have been put in place to help ensure that all retailers are playing their part in phasing out unnecessary single-use plastics and that real change is achieved for our environment.

The new regulations are widely accepted by New Zealanders so getting on board early also means businesses will avoid criticism from customers and the media.



STEPS FOR A CLEAN TRANSITION

The New Zealand plastic-bag ban will affect all retailers who currently use lightweight, single-use plastic shopping bags, including HDPE plastic, biodegradable, compostable, and degradable bags. If you currently use these bags in your business, you will need to plan, prepare and make changes over the next few months.

5 STEPS FOR A CLEAN TRANSITION

1. UNDERSTAND THE BAN

It's important for retailers to research and understand the nuances of the coming regulations so that they can confidently enact changes that fall within the government's guidelines. The contents of the Waste Minimisation (Plastic Shopping Bag) Regulations 2018 can be found here: www.legislation.gov.nz

Green Business HQ is also hosting workshops to help businesses make the transition more smoothly. You can view upcoming workshops here: <https://greenbusinesshq.com/workshops>

2. MAKE A PLAN

The new regulations on plastic bags will uniquely affect different retailers. It's important to consider all of the ways your business will be affected by the change and make a customised transition plan that fits your business model and customer base.

Some questions to ask yourself are:

1. What alternatives to single-use plastic bags will I offer my customers? What will I charge customers for my chosen alternatives?
2. What business processes will be affected?
3. Will I need to make changes to any physical layouts in the store?
4. How can I meet growing customer demand for more sustainable packaging? How can I use this as an opportunity to increase my sustainability in other areas?
5. What training will I need to provide for my staff to ensure a smooth transition?
6. It might be helpful to check out what similar retailers are doing, ask your customers for feedback and consider trialing other bag options during the phase-in period to allow for a smoother transition.

3. WEIGH THE OPTIONS

There are dozens of alternatives that retailers can offer as a substitute to single-use plastic bags but not all of them are created equal. Below you will find a list of options and notes about their environmental impact.

Permitted Bags	Environmental Impact and Sustainability Recommendations
Alternatives to Single-Use Plastic Bags	
<p>“Fabric Bags”</p> <p>Bags made from bio-based materials that have not been converted to plastic (e.g., cotton, jute, hemp, paper, flax)</p>	<p>Most recommended. These are highly reusable and often biodegradable. Look for options that are Fairtrade, durable and organic.</p>
<p>“Reusable Plastic Bags”</p> <p>Long-life multi-use shopping bags made from synthetic material (often plastic) over 70 microns in thickness.</p>	<p>Not recommended. These have a longer shelf life than traditional plastic shopping bags but they are not biodegradable and will eventually end up in a landfill.</p>
<p>Paper Bags</p>	<p>These are favorable to plastic bags but are not recommended due to the high amount of resources needed to create them and their single-use nature.</p> <p>If you do choose to offer paper bags ensure that these are made of recycled paper. Or paper that holds Forest Stewardship Council certification.</p>
<p>“Produce Bags”</p> <p>Plastic bags without handles including lightweight ‘barrier bags’ (e.g., bags used for containing meat, deli and/or vegetable produce)</p>	<p>While produce bags are permitted in the ban, we recommend that you also allow customers to bring in their own containers or reusable produce bags.</p> <p>You can also choose to sell reusable produce bags or provide lightweight paper bags that are FSC-certified (Forest Stewardship Council).</p>
<p>Other Products</p> <p>Bin liners, bags for pet waste and bags that form an integral part of a product’s packaging (e.g., sealed pouches with handles)</p>	<p>We recommend that you help customers eliminate the need for these products. Offer reusable packaging solutions where possible.</p> <p>For products that do require packaging ensure plastic film or plastic bags used are accepted by New Zealand’s soft plastic recycling scheme. Only consider compostable plastic film packaging if composting collection services for these materials are also offered in store until such time as these services are made available nationally.</p>

4. PREPARE YOUR TEAM

Involving your team will be critical to managing the ban. Think about how you will involve, prepare and train your staff, especially those who have regular contact with customers (front of house, checkout operators and customer service staff).

Depending on the alternatives you choose to offer, you may also need to consider changes to packing processes, point-of-sale areas and displays, as well as workplace health and safety issues like packing weights and manual handling.

5. INFORM YOUR CUSTOMERS & MANAGE THE TRANSITION

Support for the phasing-out of plastic bags is high across New Zealand, with more than 65,000 Kiwis signing the petition calling for the ban.

In addition to that, many supermarket chains are already phasing out plastic bags, while customers are getting used to bringing reusable bags when they shop. Recent research found that 50 percent of New Zealanders are already bringing reusable bags when going shopping.

Help your customers develop this habit by putting up stickers, signage and posters reminding them to bring their own bags and consider offering reusable bags for sale in your store.

You can purchase stickers, signage and posters developed as part of this kit at:
<https://greenbusinesshq.com/products/plastic-bag-ban-kit/>



Find out more at
greenbusinessHQ.com/plasticban

#zerowaste #plasticbagban #bringyourownbag

