



Media release

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Ban on plastic bags another step towards a waste-free circular economy

The Sustainable Business Network welcomes the Government's announcement today that single-use plastic bags will be phased out. It's another positive step towards a circular economy for New Zealand.

Rachel Brown, CEO of the Sustainable Business Network, says: "The environmental impact of plastic packaging, particularly single-use plastic bags, is now well-known. But what many people don't realise is that there's a massive economic cost involved too because of resource wastage. The cost of packaging waste sits at around \$80 billion globally and is rising as the costs of clean up are added. So the phasing out of single-use plastic bags is not only good for the environment, it's good for the economy."

"Plastic bags are just the tip of the iceberg. That's why we're working with 10 leading businesses to better understand New Zealand's entire plastic packaging system. We need to radically change how we design, use and re-use plastics."

"Members of the Sustainable Business Network are already on a mission to take responsibility for their own plastic packaging. We will continue to work with them and Government to create a 'new plastics economy'. I hope all New Zealanders will get in behind this and support the retailers and manufacturers who are working to reduce the plastic waste in our environment."

The Sustainable Business Network (SBN) welcomes the New Zealand Plastic Packaging Declaration. This commits signatories to using 100% reusable, recyclable or compostable packaging in their New Zealand operations by 2025 or earlier. However SBN advocates for greater collaborative and co-ordinated focus across business, government and the community.

Rachel says: "We need to do this to deliver – ideally over-deliver – to the commitments being made. The world is looking for solutions, so why not drive them from Aotearoa?"

The Sustainable Business Network's Circular Economy Accelerator (CEA) is leading work to shift New Zealand from a 'take, make, waste' linear model to circular economy. This will be low carbon, waste free, and highly efficient.

In a circular economy the lifecycles of materials are maximised. Their use is optimised. At the end of life all materials are reutilised. Legislation, such as phasing out single-use plastic bags, is an important way to make the circular economy a reality across the entire economy.

James Griffin leads the Circular Economy Accelerator. He says:

"To solve the plastics problem we need unprecedented co-operation and co-ordination across business, the community and Government. The CEA has started a process to identify issues across the plastic packaging system in New Zealand with support from Bluebird Foods, Coca-Cola Amatil (NZ), Countdown, Earthwise, ecostore, Freedom Farms, Lewis Road Creamery, My Food Bag, New Zealand King Salmon, and New Zealand Post."

While supporting the Government's initiative, James adds a note of caution.

"The plastic packaging system is a complex one, which is also connected to other complex systems such as food and medicine," he says. We must be careful that any changes we make as we redesign this system do not have unforeseen consequences. The Government has worked well with business thus far and we anticipate they will continue to work flexibly with business as we all work to identify the best way to move forward.

"What is abundantly clear is that no group, government or country can do this on its own. It's vital that we all continue to work together on this. Today's announcement is a clear signal that the government shares this view."

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About the Sustainable Business Network

The Sustainable Business Network is New Zealand's largest and longest-standing organisation dedicated to sustainable business. It includes hundreds of businesses that connect through events, resources and projects to help New Zealand become a more sustainable nation.

Our independent network is open to all organisations actively working to improve their sustainability performance.

www.sustainable.org.nz.

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