



**Sustainable  
Business  
Network**

**Media release**

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# Getting rid of problematic plastic packaging – new guidelines for business

**The plastic waste landscape is rapidly changing. Businesses are finding it difficult to navigate and are looking for the right advice on packaging.**

**New plastic packaging guidance is released today that outlines the pathway ahead for businesses (report attached).**

**Major New Zealand companies have been collaborating on packaging to reach a future where convenience needn't pollute our land and waterways.**

The Sustainable Business Network (SBN) has today released the latest wave of [guidance on plastic packaging](#) for New Zealand firms. The findings come from a multi-year collaboration between experts in business, packaging innovation and regulation. The goal is to radically reduce the impact of packaging in this country, from production to the end of its life.

Highlights from the new guidance include:

- The age of excess packaging is coming to an end. Businesses need better design, or they'll suffer against regulation and the competition.
- Disposable plastics are being disposed of. We're at the beginning of a reuse and refill revolution.
- Not all plastic is equal and not all plastic is recyclable. Plastics 1 (PET), 2 (HDPE) and 5 (PP) are currently recycled kerbside here. The others are generally landfilled. Businesses need to avoid plastics 3 and 6. Otherwise they're not just passing on packaging, they're passing on problems.
- Compostable packaging is not yet a suitable national solution. The guidance from the Food and Grocery Council is that compostable packaging is 'not for now'. This is because the required systems are not at the scale ready to deal with it. There is progress being made to overcome some of the system wide challenges compostable packaging faces, so watch this space!
- The first thing businesses need to do is analyse and record what plastic they produce and use. New Zealand needs to improve its data on the amount of plastics in our economy.

Kate Haselhoff leads the project for SBN. She says: “All businesses need to know about this rapidly changing situation. It’s affecting everything from the kind of cups a café might choose, to where to place recycling centres. At the moment it’s confusing for brands, and some packaging has misleading claims about being sustainable. Our goal is to make it as simple as possible for everyone to see and meet these challenges.”

Plastic waste became a critical economic issue in New Zealand in 2017, when China effectively stopped accepting shipments of packaging waste. This raised the key question of how to build and run sustainable packaging systems in our remote location, with a small and relatively dispersed population.

A key solution is the development of a circular economy in packaging for New Zealand. In this approach these materials are never abandoned to become waste or pollution. It means shifting from problematic and single use packaging towards reusable and refill options. It means switching problematic plastics for new materials. And it means radically improving our recycling to divert waste from landfill and create value from what’s returned.

SBN has been working on this for three years, and is supported by Foodstuffs NZ, as well as sustainability consultants thinkstep-anz and leading exporters New Zealand King Salmon. In 2018 SBN produced a [diagnosis report](#) of how this system has been working. Since then it has been hosting a series of collaborative Masterclasses to work out the way forward. These have had participants from more than 100 organisations, including government agencies, recyclers, designers, innovators, packaging producers, distributors.

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