



Press Release

Consumers in favour of a ban on Single Use Plastic

New Delhi, Feb 19, 2020:A new study titled '**Single Use Plastic-The Last Straw**' released by the environmental group Toxics Link in New Delhi today, reveals that consumers in India recognize the environmental impact of disposable plastic products and want a ban on many single use plastics in the country. The results highlight growing public awareness of the problem of single use plastic waste in the country. Single use plastic has been identified globally as one of the key contributors to marine pollution and the most found items in global beach cleanups. By 2025, it is estimated that the ocean will contain one ton of plastic for every three tons of fish; and by 2050, it will have more plastics than fish.

The online survey sought opinions of consumers, across different age groups and gender, on single use plastic like straws, plastic cutlery, disposable plastic food ware and online shopping packaging. Eight out of ten consumers felt that the online platforms were using excessive packaging and needs to be regulated. Of those surveyed, more than 85% said they actively would choose to eliminate or opt for plastic free alternatives in online shopping, dining in or ordering food. More than 50% respondents said that leaf or bio-plastic food ware in public or private functions are good alternatives and should be used. Views on the issue vary depending on age and society-economic factors, however, Millennials and Gen Zs are “generally more mindful” of single-use plastics than older generations, according to the report.

“Corporations and governments have a big role to play in addressing the plastic waste menace; but individuals can also do their bit and our study clearly shows that given a choice, people are willing to eliminate single-use plastic and opt for alternatives”, states Priti Banthia Mahesh, Chief program Coordinator Toxics Link.

The study, which has been conducted by Toxics Link in 2019-2020, looked at consumer perception as well as on-ground recycling of Single Use Plastic (SUP) in India.

The informal players, who handle majority of plastic waste in the country, disclosed during the field study in Delhi, that many single use plastic products, especially multi-layered plastic, tiny PCCP and FMCG pouches and noodle kind of packets are complete untouchables and do not get picked up or recycled. These SUPs end up in landfills and waterbodies, and probably contribute to the microplastic load. Packaging wrappers, PCPP tubes, Medicine wrappers and poly-

propylene products (known in the market as 'FARRA') are also not in demand and rarely get collected. This is mainly because of the low recycling value as well as the soiled conditions in which they are found. PET bottles, disposable pens, PCCP bottles, plastic boxes etc. have good recycling value and hence the informal as well as formal players collect them.

The study also reports that there is still some ambiguity over the understanding of single-use plastic amongst public. During the survey, it was rather surprising to see that most consumers did not consider mineral water bottles or plastic straws as Single-Use Plastic. The more shocking finding was that only 57% of the respondents thought plastic carry bags were single-use plastic!

As per the CPCB report 2018-19, India annually generates approximately 3.6 million metric tons of plastic waste. It recycles 60% of its waste, three times higher than the global average of 20 percent, through a chain of informal networks of collectors and recyclers. But the latest report by Toxics Link also raises serious concerns on that, as the number could be almost three times of this. Apart from environmental and occupational exposure risks, the processing in informal sector is mostly 'DOWNCYCLING', meaning the quality of plastic is going down every time. "Environmental impacts of plastics have been consistently downplayed by interested parties and only projected plastics as a simple waste issue thus steering clear from owning responsibility for its adverse impacts", says Satish Sinha Associate Director, Toxics Link.

The Indian Government, in 2016, banned Plastic Bags having a thickness less than 50 microns, under the **revised Plastic Waste Management Rules and several state governments have announced banning of polythene bags as well as some on single use plastics, but these measures have so far been ineffective.** The government has also not put in place a clear roadmap with timelines to meet the 2022 deadline for eliminating manufacturing and use of single-use plastics.

Highlights of the report

- The study attempts to perceive consumer behavior and knowledge on single-use plastic, identify the barriers in reducing single use plastic waste.
- 46% of the respondents are almost regularly taking plastic bags from vendors when they shop. Only 17% of the respondents said that they never take plastic bags. Of those surveyed, women seem more eco-friendly as only 9%, compared to 19% men took plastic bags everytime they shopped.
- 46% chose cloth bags as the best alternative, followed by jute and Bio-plastic bags.
- 77% of respondents said that the online shopping platforms used excessive packaging and 91% said that they would chose less packaging, given a choice. 91% also felt a government guideline is required to reduce this.
- 32% said that traditional leaf plates should be used in religious and cultural functions, 33% opting for bio-plastic and 25% preferring steel.
- 86% of the respondents said that they would choose to not take plastic cutlery with food ordered online, if given a choice. And 36% actually saying there was no need for cutlery as part of the delivery.

- 87% of our respondents said that they would choose not to take a straw if they were given a choice.
- 61% respondents were unaware of the Plastic Waste Rules- clearly indicating the need for awareness.
- Informal sector recycles a large quantum of plastic but many single use plastic products are not getting recycled and were found lying in dumpsites and landfill.
- Multi-layered packets of biscuits, wafers, namkeens etc. have not recycling value and either are burnt or landfilled. Small shampoo, cream, aachaar, ketchup pouches are also not picked up by the informal sector.

About Toxics Link:

Toxics Link is an Indian environmental research and advocacy organization set up in 1996, engaged in disseminating information to help strengthen the campaign against toxics pollution, provide cleaner alternatives and bring together groups and people affected by this problem. Toxics Link's Mission Statement - "Working together for environmental justice and freedom from toxics. We have taken upon ourselves to collect and share both information about the sources and the dangers of poisons in our environment and bodies, and information about clean and sustainable alternatives for India and the rest of the world." Toxics Link has a unique expertise in areas of hazardous, medical and municipal wastes, international waste trade, and the emerging issues of pesticides, Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs), hazardous heavy metal contamination etc. from the environment and public health point of view. We have successfully implemented various best practices and have brought in policy changes in the aforementioned areas apart from creating awareness among several stakeholder groups.

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