

Take on the challenge of banning single-use plastic bags
in your shop!

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INTRODUCTION

RETAILERS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

For many retailers, sustainability and environmental issues are topics of major interest for retailers. Situated at the point between production and consumption, the distribution sector has a leading role to play regarding sustainability and sustainable consumption. Some have also put forward a real sales and attractiveness proposition for consumers, and have integrated environmental aspects in the way they do things, and in what they offer.

The question of waste and packaging is one of the major challenges that the sector is confronted with. Initiatives coming from small and large shops, have thus multiplied over the last few years, to limit the distribution and use of plastic bags in shops.

In a context of increased competition, retailers who chose not to distribute and use plastic bags can strengthen their brand image, and attract a broad audience of citizens, who consider the environmental impact of a product when they decide which to purchase. The effect is thus win-win for shops, citizens and society on the whole. Finally, the adoption of a European Directive on plastic

bags in 2015 has pushed numerous Member States in the European Union to take measures to fight against the plastic bag epidemic, and have thus brought European retailers together in the collective effort to reduce our consumption of plastic bags.

SURFRIDER FOUNDATION EUROPE AND ITS BAN THE BAG CAMPAIGN

Surfrider Foundation Europe is a not-for-profit organisation, which acts in Europe to protect and enhance lakes, rivers, the ocean, waves and the coastline. Created more than 27 years ago in Europe by a group of local surfers, today it brings together more than 9,000 members and acts over 10 countries through thirty volunteer branches called “chapters”.

The Oceans Initiatives – a Surfrider programme and actions to raise awareness about the problem of marine litter by organizing litter collections at beaches, lakes, rivers, and seabed - have revealed that plastic bags feature in the Top 10 of the most collected litter items. It was the reason why, pushed by the different Chapters of the organisation over Europe, Surfrider Foundation Europe, for the first time in 2011, launched the Ban the Bag campaign, against single-use plastic bags. The battle is also active over the 5 continents through the Surfrider Foundation’s international network (in the United States, Morocco, Australia, Japan, Canada, Argentina, etc).

The Ban the Bag campaign aims to reduce the distribution and use of single-use plastic bags to, ultimately, eliminate this pollution at the source and to contribute to the fight against the plastic pollution of aquatic and marine environments, as well as coastline plastic pollution.

This campaign aims to influence public decision-makers on a local, regional, national and international level to create awareness and support citizens, local authorities and retailers to contribute to a change in behaviour, moving to reusable bags, and for a total disappearance of plastic bags.

A GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE: FOR WHOM AND WHY?

Based on literature research and actions we've conducted on the ground in a great range of shops and markets, and thanks to the support and feedback we received from our volunteers and chapters over Europe, we have taken on the challenge of getting into the skin of retailers, small and large, permanent or travelling retailers, to understand their daily problems around plastic bags.

The aim of this guide is to support each retailer in a positive process in transitioning towards a plastic bag-free shop.

Through 7 challenges to be taken on, this guide brings together all the questions you have asked about a possible future without plastic bags for your shop, with alternative solutions and good practices already used by other retailers.

This guide gives you the tools to implement these solutions, hand-in-hand with your customers and enhance the image of your plastic bag-free shop.

As retailers, you are essential players in the supply chain with the ability to make a major contribution for a more positive

future. The ecological transition cannot happen without solid, local responses to these global challenges. A lot of citizens throughout the world are calling for a complete ban on single-use plastic bags. So, lead the way and say goodbye to plastic bags!





**challenges
to
take on
for a
plastic
bag-free
shop!**

READY?

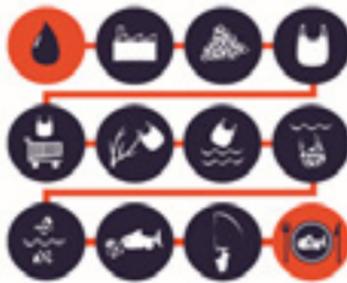
CHALLENGE 1

**UNDERSTAND
THE CHALLENGES
OF BANNING SINGLE-USE
PLASTIC BAGS**

Plastic is made from naphtha, a liquid that comes from oil refinery. After various chemical processes, this raw material is transformed to produce a plastic bag.

This production technique, that comes from non-renewable fossil reserves, was very broadly developed in the 1970s which marked the start of the plastic era. **That is how plastic production has multiplied tenfold in almost 50 years.**

Since then, plastic bags have become our society's symbol of overconsumption, used in large quantities daily by retailers and consumers.



WHAT ENVIRONMENTAL AND HEALTH-RELATED CHALLENGES DO A RETAILER FACE IN THE DISTRIBUTION OF SINGLE-USE PLASTIC BAGS?

Produced in one second, and used, on average, for 20 minutes, single-use plastic bags spend more time in landfill, in nature or in being treated to be recycled, in the best-case scenario, than being used.

If their use is extremely limited, the lifespan of plastic bags is, however, spectacularly long. We estimate, on average, that a

lifespan of 100 to 400 years is needed for this little item to decompose in nature, which makes it one of the most persistent pollutants ever designed.

WHAT HAPPENS DURING THESE YEARS OF PERSISTENCE IN THE ENVIRONMENT?

Abandoned in nature or in landfill, the lightness of plastic bags is a quality which also makes them easily taken away by the wind, driven along by waterways, and ending their journey in oceans and seas.

Plastic today constitutes 70 to 90% of waste found in oceans. In 2010, nothing but 8 billion plastic bags were found in nature in Europe. This plastic, originating from accumulations of plastic in certain areas of the world called plastic continents are no more and no less responsible for the death of 1 million birds and 100,000 mammals every year. By maintaining such a rate of consumption, and based on current observations, scientists estimate that there will be more plastic than fish in our oceans in 2050!



Plastic bags are also potentially dangerous for human health. Indeed, plastic breaks down until it forms microscopic particles. They contaminate land and water and appear in the food chain. Marine animals ingest them, and persistent pollutants are found at the bottom of the food chain, in what we eat. We estimate that the Mediterranean sea contains 250 billion plastic particles which float to the surface, reaching a weight of 500 tonnes.

Pollution by plastic bags also has economic consequences: cost of cleaning beaches, disturbance of maritime economic activities, less attractiveness for tourists, etc.

WHY STOP SINGLE-USE PLASTIC BAGS IN YOUR SHOP?

To best avoid plastic bags being found in our environment and our oceans, the most effective solution is to stop all distribution, free or at a cost, of single-use plastic bags. This decision is often more efficient taken when a law is adopted to ban single-use plastic bags in all shops. **However, as retailers, the initiative of this ban also comes down to you,** stopping any ordering and distribution of plastic bags in your shop.

Good practices

Marks & Spencer in the United Kingdom has implemented a tax of 5 pence on plastic bags distributed in their shops. As a result, the company has been able to reduce by 80% the number of plastic bags used in one year after adopting these measures.



WHERE CAN I GET INFORMATION?

Watch the video “Ask Surfrider”
about plastic bags



Read the lesson created by Surfrider
about plastic bags and their impact,
and test your knowledge via our quiz
on the subject



Have a look at Surfrider’s graphics
about plastic bags

CHALLENGE 2

**INFORM YOURSELF
ABOUT APPLICABLE
REGULATIONS AND THINK
AHEAD**

We then advise you to get to know the legislation in place about plastic bags in your geographic area, country or town. This will help you to know in which regulatory framework you are, and if a schedule towards banning single-use plastic bags is perhaps already planned.

Please be aware, that in May 2015, a European Directive was adopted in the European Union. Since then, it has created an unprecedented push throughout the whole of Europe, for the actual reduction of single-use plastic bags. The Directive requires Member States to take measures aiming to reduce their consumption of lightweight plastic bags. The Member States had until 27 November 2016 to transpose the Directive into their respective national laws.

On a European level, Italy and France banned single-use plastic bags. Some Member States preferred to sign voluntary agreements with a section of the retail sector. This is the case in Germany. Other countries finally made the choice to tax plastic bags, as in Portugal or in Ireland. Finally, as Surfrider Foundation Europe's report of 3 July 2017 revealed, on the occasion of the International Plastic Bag Free Day, some countries are still late in reporting or merely adopting measures to reduce plastic bag consumption in their countries. This report will allow you to have a glimpse of what the legislation is on plastic bags in each one of the Member States of the European Union, enabling you to know if your country has implemented a ban on plastic bags, a tax, or has signed a voluntary agreement with the retail sector to encourage them to freely take measures allowing them to re-

duce their distribution of plastic bags, or has done nothing in this regard. Your respective Environment Ministry's websites are also useful to find out this information, which will then help you to decide on the type of bags that you can continue to distribute or not, according to the law.

Carefully read the legislation in place. Indeed, it often specifies the scope of the ban or measures, the definitions and the types of bags concerned by the measures adopted, defining what the exemptions are, the schedule for implementation, and will provide with all the information you need to prepare or plan ahead for the transition towards a plastic bag-free shop. If no action at national level is planned, please be aware that this will not last, but also, that you too, as retailers, have the means to be a game-changer, and to counteract the authorities not acting by setting the example.

According to a study, 70% of market consumers would happily move to retailers that respect the environment!

Good practices

Atrium, in the Brussels region in Belgium, the regional trade company has implemented tools to help shops in the region to better understand and apply the ban on plastic bags, effective from 1 September 2017 for checkout bags, and from 1 September 2018 for bags used for carrying fruits and vegetables. This is where making contact with the authorities is important, they will then support you if you want to plan ahead or go further than the existing laws, or again, they will support you when regulatory measures have been taken to reduce the consumption of plastic bags.



WHERE DO YOU FIND THE LEGISLATION THAT IS APPLICABLE IN YOUR COUNTRY IN EUROPE?

View Surfrider Foundation Europe's report on legislations of the 28 Member States of the European Union



View Eur-lex, the European database, which shows all the transposition measures* reported by Member States relating to the European Directive 2015/720 on plastic bags and provides a summary** of the European legislation in this regard, in all the languages of the European Union.

CHALLENGE 3

DIAGNOSE
YOUR PLASTIC BAG
CONSUMPTION AND ANALYSE
YOUR CUSTOMERS' BEHAVIOUR

START BY ANSWERING THESE FEW QUESTIONS RELATING TO YOUR PRACTICES:

- What bags do you use?
- For what products?
- In what quantity?
- Are they in free distribution?
- Are they offered at the checkout?
- How much do you pay for them? How much do you make your clients pay for them?
- What plastic bag management system is in place in your locality? Are plastic bags recycled? Are they put in landfill?
- Does your supplier of plastic bags also have reusable bags?

Then question your customers about their habits and their feelings about getting rid of plastic bags in your shop. You must then analyse your customers' responses and make choices guiding your transition to a plastic bag-free shop.

Good practices

The shop Foodworks in the small city of Yack-andandah in Australia has decided to stop distributing plastic bags in 2017, following a survey carried out with its customers, 85% of whom have positively supported this process.



DISTRIBUTE THIS QUESTIONNAIRE

ON AVERAGE, HOW MANY PLASTIC BAGS DO YOU USE FOR YOUR SHOPPING?

- None • 1 • 2-5 • 6-10 • >10

HOW OFTEN DO YOU GO SHOPPING?

- Every day • Once a week • Once a fortnight • Once a month • Other

ARE YOU CONCERNED ABOUT PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT, AND IN PARTICULAR, ABOUT REDUCING WASTE?

- Very concerned • Concerned • Not very concerned • Not at all concerned

WOULD YOU BE READY TO STOP USING PLASTIC BAGS AT THE CHECKOUT, AND CHANGE THESE BAGS FOR OTHER, MORE ECOLOGICAL MEANS?

- Yes • No

IF YES, WHICH MEANS FROM THE LIST BELOW?

- Reusable plastic bags • Carrier bags • Fabric bags • Paper bags • String bags • Other

WOULD YOU BE READY TO STOP USING PLASTIC BAGS FOR FRUITS AND VEGETABLES, AND CHANGE THESE BAGS FOR OTHER, MORE ECOLOGICAL MEANS?

- Yes • No

IF YES, WHICH MEANS FROM THE LIST BELOW?

- Reusable plastic bags • Carrier bags • Fabric bags
- Paper bags • String bags • Other

WOULD YOU BE READY TO INVEST IN STRING BAGS FOR FRUIT AND VEGETABLES AND BRING THEM WITH YOU WHEN DOING YOUR SHOPPING?

- Yes • No • Not sure either way

IF YES, HOW MUCH WOULD YOU PAY (FOR A PACK OF 3 STRING BAGS)?

- Less than 2 euros • Between 3 and 5 euros • 5 euros and more

WHAT IS THE MAIN REASON WHY YOU WOULD NOT USE A REUSABLE BAG?

- Lack of space at home • I have not thought about it
- I reuse my plastic bag as a bin bag • I do not have other bags or means of transporting my shopping • It is too difficult – it is too limiting • It does not look good • Other:

MOST OFTEN, WHAT DO YOU DO WITH YOUR PLASTIC BAGS?

- I keep them
- I throw them in the bin

HOW MANY BAGS DO YOU THINK YOU HAVE AT HOME?

- 1
- 2-4
- 5-9
- 10-15
- More than 15

WHERE DO YOU KEEP THESE BAGS AT HOME?

- Near the entrance to my home
- In my kitchen
- In my vehicle
- In my handbag
- Other



CHALLENGE 4

**LEARN ABOUT
EXISTING ALTERNATIVES**



Compared with other materials, plastic is relatively hardly recycled. Today, only 22% of plastic packaging is recycled, compared with 92% for glass, 87% for paper/cardboard and 112% for steel.

But, to take care of our environment and embrace this change that citizens are calling upon, it is also and especially about consuming better within the limits of our planet and our resources, encouraging reuse. Economists show that we are moving more and more towards a service and collaborative economy, where we are blissfully led to come out of the producer/consumer/discarder triangle.

As a retailer, you are in a key position to promote sustainable consumption and answer to the citizen's growing calls for more sustainable offers and plastic bag free shops and mar-

kets. It is therefore vital that you make yourself aware about the existing alternatives to single use plastic bags, which often imply a very simple and positive return to your roots.

Plastic bags have only been used in large quantities for almost 50 years! Many alternatives to plastic bags that are practical, cheap and sustainable are available to you, and to your customers.

Make your life easier and opt for reusable bags!

GOOD ALTERNATIVES TO PLASTIC BAGS

THE REUSABLE BAG

Generally made from material such as nylon, hessian or cotton, it is the most practical and most accessible solution to plastic bags. Many options exist to produce these bags which are becoming more and more the trend. If most can contain between 25 and 30 litres and be quickly forgotten because of their size, other 10 to 15-litre bags have been designed to be folded, to be able to be slid all the time into any handbag, satchel or in your pocket! Some of these bags are even designed with compartments, enabling to help your customer to store bottles of wine or olive oil that they have bought in your

shop, for example. In the category of reusable bags, there are also cool bags. Opposite to plastic bags, which do not keep food away from light and heat, the cool bag is a foolproof trick to convince your customer to not use plastic bags. **Do not hesitate to encourage your customers to bring their own reusable bags, which they can reuse for life.**



At the start of your new policy in favour of a plastic bag-free shop, you can also order a limited number of reusable bags, that you can either distribute for free to your customers, recording to whom you have already given one, or keep at your checkout to sell, when your customers exceptionally forget their reusable bags. In both cases, the aim is to limit the distribution of bags. Indeed, reusable bags consume more energy when they are produced than single-use plastic bags and thick plastic carrier bags; they only fulfil their ecological role when they are reused 15 to 20 times, as a minimum. Moreover, there is no interest for your customer to have dozens of

them, since they can reuse those they already have. **Plastic bag free shops are there to encourages customers to reuse their reusable bags.**

If you decide to sell or to make reusable bags available, it is important to pay attention to the materials in which they are produced. Opt for seals of approvals, showing that bags are made from recycled or recovered materials. It is essential that the reusable bag can also be recycled, as far as possible.

Good practices

For Earth Day, AML Foods Ltd launched the BYOB (Bring Your Own Bag) movement, encouraging customers in the Grand Bahamas to swap their plastic bags for reusable bags, distributed for free. The aim of the movement: to, in the end, make plastic bags disappear from streets in the Bahamas, by encouraging customers to reuse the bags they received for free, in their future shopping trips.



THE BACKPACK, THE SATCHEL, ETC.

Do your customers live in the city and only walk, take the underground or cycle to go to the shops? The backpack is the perfect solution for your urban customers. Backpacks are light bags, not bulky and very comfortable. They have the benefit of containing a lot and enabling you to store food in different compartments, thanks to the numerous pockets they often have. This container is therefore to be recommended to your customers without hesitation. **In particular, it responds well to all the disadvantages of plastic bags.** Indeed, if plastic bags are light, they often irritate customers as they are very weak and are not suitable for transporting heavy purchases, their handles are often too fragile and are the cause of hands hurting. The backpack allows you to avoid this type of annoyance. Being very easy to transport, customers often have one of them on their back, without having to plan in advance to do their shopping on the same day. It is therefore suitable for unplanned trips.



THE STRING BAG

Invented in 1926, the string bag is coming back into fashion. And for good reason: it is light, foldable, extendable and trendy. The possibility to wash it is also a considerable benefit, particularly for your customers who would argue that the plastic bag is more hygienic. They are also extremely cheap. Advice right here, that for reusable bags, it can be beneficial for you to sell these string bags in your shop, or to distribute them for free at the start of your shop's new transition, of course, depending on the means you have.



THE TROLLEY

The trolley is the most effective container to use in doing your shopping. Do not hesitate to encourage your customers to use them, they will keep their food but also keep their backs from aching, allowing them to transport heavy loads. Your role as a retailer is important to help customers to store their fruits,

vegetables and other products inside their trolley correctly, to keep these products in a good condition until they are put into their fridges and their cupboards.



CRATES

Used to store your products and put them on the shelf, they can be an excellent way of helping out customers who have forgotten to bring along their reusable containers. Moreover, some customers choose to do their shopping directly with them, being able to opt for solid, foldable plastic crates, or other, more decorative wooden crates, which can be stored directly in their kitchen. You can have them at your checkout to give them ideas which will perhaps convince them to use them.





TUPPERWARE CONTAINERS AND JARS

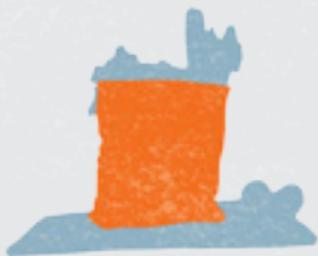
Tupperware containers and other jar-type containers are more and more common in markets and small shops selling products by weight, as this can be the case for cheese, fish, meat, fruit and vegetables, even cereals and other food. If a lot of consumers have got into the habit of bringing their own containers to do their shopping, retailers don't always agree on putting the products they sell in them.

Indeed, saying goodbye to plastic bags is about accepting new methods of storing food, such as Tupperware containers and jars. To do this, renewing your weighing system is useful, so that it is suitable for any type of container. Because filling these containers yourself can take more time, these new methods of your customers' consumption will require patience and understanding at first from your side. Think about installing a second set of scales, allowing you to weight food and containers at the same time and to compensate for the time taken to fill these food boxes, helping you to maintain your shop's efficiency and attractiveness.

Finally, it is important to clearly display at your checkout, the option for customers to use these new tools to do their shopping in your shop or on your stall. This, in particular, will demonstrate your capacity to adapt to your customers' new habits and generate loyalty from them, too.

GOOD IDEAS THAT ARE, ACTUALLY, **NOT GOOD** IDEAS

PAPER BAGS



As plastic bags disappear, paper bags are making a remarkable entry into shops. Indeed, the paper bags can appear to be satisfactory alternatives to plastic bags. They are biodegradable, which means that they can decompose quicker in nature than plastic bags, and form a natural compost. **However, if they actually decompose quicker, this decomposition still takes years, during which paper bags contaminate our ecosystems.** The process of producing paper bags requires the addition of chemical substances which threaten our environment, starting with the contamination of our waterways, and require a lot of water.

On another note, the paper bag falls under the single-use bag category. The ecological cost caused by the widespread use of forest resources and its consequences in terms of quantities of water and energy is therefore too significant as regards the lifespan of the paper bag.

Finally, paper bags are more expensive to buy for retailers and offer fragile, short-lived and non-permeable alternatives. So, if it can be useful to help out a few of your customers as a one-off, depending on how you evaluate the situation and in

exchange for a tax to be paid, the paper bag must not be automatically distributed at your checkout.

The best solution consists of encouraging your customers to bring their own reusable bags, as the best waste is waste which was not created in the first place!

BIOPLASTICS

Bioplastic bags are produced from plant substances that come from potatoes, cereals, and other things. Produced from renewable and plant components, their production depends less on oil. However, please be aware: their vegetable sourcing says nothing concerning their biodegradability. Moreover, **the resources used to produce bioplastic bags need huge amount of water** and can compete with resources used, either for human food, or for livestock food. These products incidentally are not always ecological, often genetically modified. Finally, these bags will cost you quite a bit more than encouraging your customers to bring their own bags and containers. Think about setting up a tax on these bags to limit their use and preserve the economy of your shop, as well as our oceans!

Biodegradable bags are designed to decompose quicker than conventional bags. Please note, however, **this decomposition and this speed are not guaranteed in all environments. This is not the case, for example, in the marine environment.** A biodegradable bag often only decomposes quickly and completely under industrial conditions, con-

ditions which are not the same within the environment, nor in homemade compost. Finally, a biodegradable bag is not often biosourced. In other words, biodegradable bags also come from petrochemistry.

Oxodegradable bags are made of plastic and chemical substances including heavy metals, leading to the decomposition of these bags into plastic microparticles. The bag breaks down and seems to disappear, but the plastic however is still actually there. Plastic fragments simply become invisible to the naked eye. **This bag is particularly harmful to the environment.** Environment organisations have repeatedly called decision-makers on banning them. We therefore recommend you not to distribute these bags in your shops.

Good practices

As part of its process towards a market without plastic bags, Ecoscience Provence has questioned fairgrounds and market gardeners about the alternatives that they deem the most relevant in taking over from consumers using single-use plastic bags.



TOOL

Go further by learning about bioplastics, by reading about the [position paper](#) of NGOs and by reading the [report](#) from the United Nations Environment Programme on this.

CHALLENGE 5

**MAKE CHANGE POSSIBLE
BY PROVIDING SUITABLE
ALTERNATIVES**

Depending on the capacity of your shop, where it is located (town or rural area, cold, humid or hot climate, etc.), but also depending on the products that you sell, **all the alternatives mentioned before are not as effective as each other**. Take your time to analyse your shop and the behaviours adopted by your customers and decide on what the best alternatives would be that may further the achievement of sustainable consumption in your shop!

It is also down to you to promote these solutions to make your customers' lives easier. **So, you can refer to the category that your shop falls into, and see what we think is best for you to embrace this change:**

FOOD SHOP

FRUIT AND VEGETABLES

As a retailer selling fruit and vegetables, you can come across several main scenarios which would push you to continue to distribute plastic bags: when customers do not have bags to transport all their vegetables; when they want to be able to weigh and transport each type of vegetable separately; when they don't want fruit or vegetables, in particular, very ripe or damaged fruit or vegetables, to make them and their belongings dirty; or again, when your customers believe using each time new single use bags guarantees better hygiene.

YOUR SOLUTIONS

Transporting all vegetables

- Make crates available in your shop or on your stall. This, again, offers a free service to your customers, like in the past with single-use plastic bags, who can reuse them when coming back over the next few days, which will also allow you to replenish your stock of crates, accumulated when receiving your products
- Sell reusable bags on your stall. Some even have layered compartments inside, allowing customers to sort their fruit and vegetables, if however, they did not want to mix them together, and mix them with the rest of their products. This solution can be the best for people who do not have a vehicle and who live far from your shop.
- If you have a market stall, do not hesitate to let your customers know if there is a seller of reusable containers on the market.
- If your shop is established in a region with a hot climate, using a cool bag is ideal to keep fruit and vegetables away from heat and light.

Weighing vegetables

- Set up a basket system available for your customers in the shop or on your stall. When weighing, you can return reusable

baskets by separately emptying and weighing the contents chosen by your customers. Once weighed, these contents will be stored in the customer's reusable container at the time of payment. Do not hesitate to invest in one or two scales more to optimise the weighing time and make the queue at your checkout go quicker.

- If you do not set up this checkout system, display at your checkout, that you can weigh vegetables placed in reusable material bags or vegetable string bags. It is also useful to allow your customers to weight their products in their own jars and Tupperware containers, in the case where fruit and vegetables sold are moist, however, by weighing the empty container before being able to adjust your scales' settings.

Hygiene and cleanliness

By periodically washing a reusable bag, or by using a string bag or a good old wicker basket, you will not have any issues with health and safety. Do not forget too, to let your customers know that in any case, fruit and vegetables must systematically be washed before being eaten.

- Once again, you can offer your customers to use crates which have been used to deliver the fruit and vegetables that you sell. Failing that, you can make clean, solid, plastic crates available, which will be logged.
- To avoid fruit and vegetables being crushed, do not hesitate to help your customers in organising their basket, trolley,

string bag or reusable bag, so that the most fragile products are placed on top of heavier and more solid products.

- Encourage your customers concerned about their container's hygiene level and the risk of dirt, to bring their own Tupperware containers/boxes when they come to do their shopping. Here again, it can be useful to place a poster on your shop front, at the checkout or on your market stall, to advise your customers about the option for them to do their shopping this way.

MOIST PRODUCTS

Butchers, delicatessens, fishmongers, cheese shops and olive stalls must meet packaging specifications for hygiene reasons. These moist products must be packaged as sealed, and they must be protected from external pollution. If the primary packaging is not sufficient, retailers generally use a plastic bag.

YOUR SOLUTIONS

- Set up a logged plastic box system (for meats, fish, etc.) or glass jars (for olives, etc). All you need to do, is then offer several container sizes depending on the quantity chosen by the customer, and then clean the containers again, that have already been brought back clean by your customers. To do this, you can call upon a specialist washing station to ensure everything is cleaned correctly.

- Package the product with newspaper.
- To keep moist products away from heat and light, and to avoid moistness increasing on the food packaging, do not also hesitate to promote the use of cool bags which are perfectly suitable for transporting these types of products, by selling them in your shop, or by talking about them to your customers.
- Provide an additional member of staff or an additional set of scales for cheese sellers to fill customers' boxes, or potentially an additional set of scales to weigh different containers. Adopt new techniques for cutting these products, so that they are adapted to the size of boxes often used by customers.
- Here again, if you accept these new types of containers instead of plastic bags, it is important to let your customers know about it!

RESTAURANTS

Bakeries and patisseries, as well as takeaway restaurants must meet health standards. Additionally, those passing by often buy this type of food spontaneously. However, a bag is hardly ever necessary.

YOUR SOLUTIONS

- Offer logged crates to transport bread, cakes and viennoiseries.

- Set up a system of logged plates for takeaway restaurants.
- Let your customers know about the benefits of using a trolley or serviettes, allowing them to transport their baguettes with no effort and without damaging them, thanks to the size and robustness of the trolley.
- Reusable bags, and particularly foldable, material bags are the best alternative to still have a handbag and to fill any unplanned hunger hole. Sell them at your checkout or let your customers know about these little tricks.
- The backpack or handbag are also the perfect containers to transport food, used daily by customers for all sorts of things

OTHERS TEXTILES/JEWELLERY/ COSMETICS

Fabric and clothes shops have certain specifications: fabrics can be very heavy, and clothes must be separated from food items, depending on where customers shop.

YOUR SOLUTIONS

- To make your customers' lives easier, a lot of shops now make light, material baskets available to help them to transport their different choices of products to fitting rooms or to checkouts, which is very practical. This also avoids you fearing seeing your customers filling their personal reusable bag in your shop, before going to the checkout.

- Once the goods have been paid for, the backpack-type or flexible-type reusable bags are an ideal solution to go shopping with and for customers to sort what they have bought, in particular, in cases where your customers have not planned to visit you in advance. These bags are essentially ideal for the flexibility of textiles and to the size of jewellery and cosmetics.
- Flexible wicker bags are also a good way for your customers to do their shopping. They are robust if the customer buys a lot, and less dirty than material bags.
- Reusable bags are trendy! Ride the wave of this new fashion, and do not hesitate to bring your own reusable bags. These bags' impenetrability is also extremely attractive, as it allows your customers to keep their cosmetics, jewellery, clothes or underwear that they have bought, away from public eyes.

AT THE CHEMIST

The confidentiality of purchases made at the chemist is a vital concept for the impenetrability of bags that are used to transport medication.

YOUR SOLUTIONS

- Polyethylene reusable bags, organic or recycled material, are all alternatives to plastic bags which are solid, easy to transport, and impenetrable. If your role as a retailer is to inform your customers about the removal of plastic bags and the opportunity to choose the option to take their own reus-

able bags with them, it comes down to your customers to give you their bags, so that you can fill them yourself, and subsequently respect the confidentiality of the medication bought.

- Backpacks also fulfil this function just as well, as far as purchase confidentiality will be further respected, thanks to its neutral, everyday appearance.

FURNITURE, DIY, GARDENING SHOP

YOUR SOLUTIONS

- Make trolleys available within your shop, allowing heavy items or plants to be transported up to your customers' vehicles. If your customers do not have a vehicle, you can log these trolleys that your customers will bring back to you on their next visit. This especially allows you to make them loyal to your shop, and to encourage them to come back.

- The best alternatives to single-use plastic bags are trolleys, which are, by far, the most solid and effective alternative for transporting heavy loads.

In short, it is best to choose wheels!

- Solid wooden or plastic crates can also be ideal for transporting plants, which could be distributed by you for free, depending on the stock you have.

- Solid, polyethylene-type bags can also be sold at the checkout to help out customers who are the least equipped for these types of purchases.

Good practices

In Espinho in Portugal, bakeries have taken part in an initiative, aiming to get customers to return their material bread bags, a means of trendy transportation, suitable for a bread baguette and a few viennoiseries, in exchange for a free bakery special.

Other shops have set up the free exchange of reusable bags after they have finished being used, as is the case in the Leclerc supermarkets in France, or the adaptation of department store trolleys with shopping bags. Finally, in New Zealand, the Boomerang Bag initiative relies on a community of volunteers who make material bags before making them available to shops. The idea consists of offering an alternative to customers, and asking them to return it to the shop, so that others can benefit from it. The initiative exists in several cities in the country, in Auckland, Rotorua, Nelson, and in the capital, Wellington.



CHALLENGE 6

**CONNECT YOUR CUSTOMERS
AND ENCOURAGE THEM TO
CHANGE**

As the middle man, you have a key role to play in the transition toward the end of single-use plastic bags.

Your message will come across, if you adopt a positive, dynamic, attractive and caring stance and communication, by which you demonstrate to your customers, like retailers, that you are invested in ensuring your own district is clean, for example. If you face customers who are against this, it will be all about not making them feel guilty, but showing them that in addition to being desirable, change is possible and feasible, and that it will be a source of savings for them. You could be faced with customers who ignore or shun away from the problem of plastic bag pollution. You can remind them that plastic bags can potentially end up on their plates or in the streets in their districts. **These people will be concerned about this serious situation, embedded in their real, everyday lives.**

In order to bring clarity to your customers and to facilitate change, do not hesitate to decide on the specific date on which you decide to finally stop offering or selling single-use plastic bags. This allows you to prewarn customers in advance, and prepare them for the change to come.

The transition period before this date is also a key moment, during which we encourage you to hide any plastic bag that you would normally display at your checkout or on your stall. This then allows your customers to be less tempted to use these polluting bags, and consequently, less tempted to ask you for one, through no longer seeing them. If someone asks you for a plastic bag, use this opportunity to let them know why and when you will stop providing bags.

Good practices

In California (United States), Taylor's Market's checkouts have changed their habits, in the perspective of the ban on single-use plastic bags that was to be implemented there. Instead of asking their customers, as ever, if they want a paper or plastic bag, they question their customers in the following way, "Do you really need a bag for that?", a different attitude, which coupled with a plastic bag tax, has enabled them to make customers reflect and change their behaviour in this shop.



It is also useful to establish one or several dedicated points to deposit crates, boxes and other reusable alternatives in your shop, so that consumers can help themselves and use them, to transport their purchased goods.

Good practices

It is what the Chez Daniel grocery in Mont-Carmel in Canada did, by asking people to bring their excess bags to redistribute them to customers when they make their purchases. Indeed, it was after a shortage of plastic bags within their shop, that the two co-owners of the Chez Daniel grocery had the idea to make a box available, which they called the “bag box”, in their shops, where customers could come and put their excess bags, to help other customers.



Banning plastic bags in your shop can also be done progressively, as part of a creative and fun campaign initiative. **You can, for example, start by banning plastic bags for one specific day in the week, one or several specific months of the year, or again, at the time of special occasions** like the International Plastic Bag Free Day, the European Week for Waste Reduction, or the World Environment Day.

Good practices

The shops managed by the University of Minnesota Duluth (United States) have started by setting up a Plastic Bag-free Month, in April, before stopping finally providing plastic bags.



At the same time, you can also favour customers who adopt sustainable consumption practices, by setting up green checkouts, for example, in other words, priority checkouts, reserved for customers who do not use throwaway bags. Finally, you can reward customers who do not take plastic bags, by offering batches of products or one product from your shop for free of charge.

Good practices

During the European Week for Waste Reduction in 2016, a “Zero Waste Retailers” campaign was set up, with 450 retailers competing. A competition entitled “Loyal to my bag” was launched on this occasion. With each purchase in the shops participating in the competition, customers equipped with their reusable bag had their card stamped. This competition aimed to reward customers who regularly used a reusable bag. Rewarded customers were those who presented cards with the largest number of stamps. Retailers had put forward several batches of products to be won.

In Australia, Harris Farm Markets supermarkets launched a one-off operation, aiming to offer 5 centimes to every customer who was not using plastic bags, before stopping the complete distribution of single-use plastic bags from 1 January 2018.



CHALLENGE 7

**COMMUNICATE
AND ENHANCE THIS CHANGE IN
YOUR SHOP AND BEYOND**

COMMUNICATE! A WIN-WIN STRATEGY

It is important that you communicate about the end of plastic bags in your shop, by using all the means you have available: **posters in the shop, posts on social networks, stickers at the checkout, plastic bag-free logo on your flyers.** All ways are good to guarantee information is there for the greatest number of people. Do not hesitate either to brief your teams, so that they pass on this message to customers at the checkout.

Finally, focused communication is good. But, do not forget to also communicate about the positive effects of what is happening, and thank your customers for their efforts on this. For example, during a specific period, making a sign visible at your shop's entrance, with a message like, "in 2017, my actions have stopped the distribution of 2000 plastic bags", will have a big effect on your customers.

Also, take the opportunity from ending single-use plastic bags in your shop, to invest in alternatives that respect the environment, which can serve as communication media to promote your shop. **The tote bag is, for example, an excellent communication support. If you can, invest in producing bags with your shop's logo on them.** Think up an attractive design, in line with your style, and then offer them to your customers or sell them for a small amount, in a way to promote yourself, while offering a container to your customer.

Good practices

Some shops have used the end of single-use plastic bags to support commendable initiatives. This is the case in Germany, where a shop launched the “goodbag”, a reusable bag, made using a fair trade organic cotton. A portion of the profits collected by selling these bags is given back to save rainforests, which are key for our ecosystem and climate regulation.

EXKi, a green fast food chain which is present in France, Belgium and Luxembourg has launched a Green Card, a loyalty card which rewards the reuse of paper and cotton bags, and thermal mugs. Every time their customers buy something without taking a plastic bag, they receive a stamp. After five stamps, the customer receives a free sandwich. An excellent communication operation for the chain, which already in 2015, joined forces with a Belgian sprinter to promote a tote bag with the EXKi logo, created by the sportsperson. This collaboration had been covered in many media outlets and trendy blogs.



ENHANCE YOUR COMMITMENT

You have a huge potential to influence and inspire, not only your customers, but other shops, too. Get information from authorities and bodies representing actors in your sector to promote your initiative, or get in contact with other shops, which like you, are committed to a positive process of change, in favour of protecting the environment. In France, for example, the “Committed shop” programme is a tool supporting a diversity of actors, including retailers and consumers, towards sustainable consumption. NGOs also often lead campaigns to promote good practices and support private actors, which set an example.

Good practices

In French Polynesia, Surfrider Foundation Europe has supported the Nana plastic bag collective, by providing them with a retailer charter available on the webpage of the organisation's Ban the Bag campaign, and communication and awareness-creating tools. The collective then approached a clothing shop to convince it to sign this charter. The shop signed it and was rewarded by a page in the local media, thus offering a perfect opportunity of communication for these retailers.



CONCLUSION

Stopping plastic bags is a major and undeniable progress towards reducing plastic pollution in our oceans. However, once this new consumption method is set up in your shop, it is still possible to implement a more ambitious plastic reduction campaign. A number of supermarkets, cafés, market stalls, etc. have paved the way, going from a ban on plastic bags, to not using plastic packaging at all. Selling loose items, deposits, reusable packaging, reuse, reparation, etc., tens of thousands of shops today follow this model all throughout the world!



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