



MINISTRY OF ECONOMIC  
GROWTH AND JOB CREATION

# PLASTIC FREE SUMMER

# FAO







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## **1. What is plastic?**

Plastic is an organic polymer comprised of carbon, hydrogen, oxygen, sulphur, nitrogen and chlorine.

## **2. Why is plastic useful?**

Plastic is lightweight, easy to process, cheap, abundant, durable, resistant to corrosion and moisture, and it requires less maintenance.

## **3. How much plastic waste is generated in Jamaica?**

According to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), of the approximately 800,000 tons of residential waste generated annually, 15% is estimated to be plastics.

## **4. What are the harmful effects of plastic pollution?**

Plastic pollution can contribute to groundwater, land and air pollution. It can upset the food chain and suffocate and poison marine animals. Among the effects listed by on human health by the Centre for International Environmental Law, are cardiovascular disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, lung cancer, leukaemia, lymphoma, brain and breast cancer, decreased fertility and toxic metal poisoning.

## **5. Why is plastic bad for the environment?**

Plastic takes between 20 to 1000 years to degrade. In the process of degrading, it releases many toxins. It can affect soil fertility as the toxins remain in the soil for years without natural degradation.

Indiscriminate disposal of plastic waste in water can block drains, leading to flooding, increased vectors such as mosquitoes and the spread of waterborne illnesses. It can cause diseases related to the stomach and intestine. Littering landfills and other open spaces with plastic is ugly and unhygienic.





## **6. Are certain plastics worse than others?**

Non-recyclable and non-reusable plastics are the worst in that they take several lifetimes to break down and leach chemicals like BPA in the process.

## **7. What is the effect of plastic pollution on marine life?**

Plastic releases toxins that poison fish and other marine creatures. Clear plastic bags in particular are known to cause harm to sea turtles who ingest them thinking that they are jellyfish, their main food. When that happens, the sea turtles starve as their bodies are unable to utilize or eliminate the plastic.

## **8. How much time does a plastic bottle take to decompose?**

Plastic bottles take approximately 450 years to decompose.

## **9. Why is so little plastic recycled?**

Waste management experts say the problem with plastic is that it is expensive to collect and sort. There are thousands of different types of plastic, and none of them can be melted down together. Plastic also degrades after one or two uses. The environmental organization Greenpeace, has found that the more plastic is reused the more toxic it becomes.

## **10. What are microplastics, and what kind of plastic is most likely to become a microplastic?**

Microplastics are pieces of plastic that are 5 mm or smaller. They can be created to be that size—such as microbeads in soaps—and they can be broken bits of a larger plastic or material with plastic parts. A UK study found that the four leading contributors to microplastics are car tires (due to abrasion on the road); external paint (from buildings and road markings); plastic pellets (used to make plastic products), and synthetic fibers from clothing.





## **11. What types of plastics are banned in Jamaica?**

Jamaica's ban on Single Use Plastics, was implemented under The Trade (Plastic Packaging Materials Prohibition) Order and The Natural Resources Conservation Authority (Plastic Packaging Materials Prohibition) Order. The ban was instituted in three phases with each phase covering specific types of single-use plastic packaging materials.

- **Phase I** which was effected on January 1, 2019 covers the use of 24"x24" polyethylene or polypropylene plastic bags (scandal bags) widely used for packaging groceries, as well as the importation, and use of plastic drinking straws.
- **Phase 2** which was effected on January 1, 2020, covers the manufacture and use of packaging made wholly or in part of expanded polystyrene foam (Styrofoam\*) used in the food and beverage industry eg. lunch boxes and cups.
- **Phase 3** was effected on January 1, 2021 and covers single use polyethylene or polypropylene plastic bags of dimensions 24"x24 "(610mm x 610 mm) and thickness of 2.5mils or less (i.e. the thicker bags in department stores). It also covered the use of plastic drinking straws attached to juice boxes and drink pouches.

It is the intention of the Government to extend the plastic ban to include personal care products that contain microplastics including some deodorants and facial soaps that contain plastic beads.

## **12. What are the fines for breaching the Plastic Ban?**

Anyone who commits an offence in contravention of the Orders is liable on summary conviction before a Judge of a Parish Court to a fine not exceeding JA\$50,000 under the NRCA Act and two million dollars (JA\$2,000,000) under the Trade Act or imprisonment for a term not exceeding two (2) years





### 13. What can I do to help reduce plastic pollution?

By incorporating the 4 R's – Refuse, Reduce, Recycle and Reuse into your lifestyle.

- Refuse to use plastic bags and straws. Instead use a steel, glass or bamboo straws and take reusable bags when shopping. Purchase reusable lunch containers and reusable bottles to hold your food and drinks.
- Recycle everything. Read labels to ensure that products do not contain microbeads. Volunteer to pick up plastic litter in your community. Educate others about plastic pollution. You could also look into forming a community art class to make craft items from used plastic products.



**REDUCE**



**REUSE**



**RECYCLE**





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