

An underwater photograph showing a clear plastic bottle and a piece of crumpled plastic bag floating in the water. The water is a deep blue-green color, and the background shows some dark, textured rocks or coral. The overall scene is somber and highlights the impact of plastic pollution on marine life.

ABU DHABI EMIRATE **SINGLE USE PLASTIC POLICY**

2020



هيئة البيئة - أبوظبي
Environment Agency - ABU DHABI

1. POLICY STATEMENT

1. Introduction

This Abu Dhabi Emirate Single Use Plastic Policy charts the course to a sustainable solution to the issue of single use plastics entering the environment and causing harm.

According to a report published by the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) in 2018, the global production of all plastics in 2015 was about 400 million tons, of which 36% (i.e. about 144 million tons) was single-use plastic packaging materials. Only 9% of all plastics are recycled, while 12% are burned and the rest (79%) are disposed of in landfills or leaked into the environment.

In the United Arab Emirates, 11 billion plastic bags are used annually (according to a report presented at the World Government Summit in February 2019), which is the equivalent of 1,182 plastic bags per person per year. This is considered a very high rate compared to the global average of 307 bags per person per year, while the rate in European Union countries is about 200 bags per person per year. This number drops to 5 single-use bags per person per year in Denmark. In this context, there is a lack of data on per capita consumption in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, and this requires to be addressed.

Against this challenge, the number of countries adopting legislation and policies limiting the use of single-use plastics is increasing rapidly. So far, more than 127 countries have adopted such measures, which include either a ban or a fee for these materials. In addition, 250 major international companies, including soft drink companies, have signed a pledge to reduce the

use of single-use plastics throughout their business.

At the national level, the Ministry of Climate Change and Environment signed a pledge with the Coalition of Innovation in Recycling towards a Closed Loop Economy comprising government, NGOs and global and local companies has been launched to tackle the issue of packaging waste pollution by improving the collection and recycling of packaging. The overall aim is to test the economic and environmental impact of a plastic circular economy and accelerate sustainability solutions for an optimized waste management infrastructure. A group of local authorities also signed a similar declaration in the emirate of Abu Dhabi during the World Ocean Summit held in March 2019.

This policy sets the general framework for tackling the single-use plastic materials challenge and identifies the instruments required to achieve related objectives.

2. Application

This policy is applicable in the emirate of Abu Dhabi and is managed by the Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi (EAD) on behalf of Abu Dhabi Government through consultation, coordination, and cooperation with the governmental and private stakeholders, and analysing impacts, based on systematic and structured procedures that contribute to achieving the objectives.

3. Method of preparation

This policy was prepared by the Environment Agency - Abu Dhabi in cooperation with 12 concerned government entities and Emirates Nature-WWF who were consulted through

workshops and bilateral meetings. Six major outlets and companies producing plastic materials were also involved as well as the Department of Economic Development, the Industrial Development Bureau and Borouge Co. More than 2,700 people nationwide were engaged in a public survey on the policy and the various alternatives carried out by the Environment Agency - Abu Dhabi in partnership with the Ministry of Climate Change and Environment.

Finally, the policy is aligned with each of the following national policies, plans and strategies:

1. The National Strategy for Plastic Waste Management.
2. A ministerial draft resolution prepared by the Ministry of Climate Change and Environment related to single use plastics.
3. National goals of the UAE 2021 vision related to waste.

4. Legal framework

Federal Law No. (12) of 2018 on the Integrated Waste Management stipulates that the competent authority will assume responsibility for waste management within its territorial jurisdiction, and may undertake the preparation of plans, programs and measures necessary for waste management to improve environmentally sound practices. Law No. (21) of 2005 on Waste Management in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi and Law No. (17) of 2008 regarding the Establishment of Center for Waste Management states that the Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi is the competent authority to implement the law, while the center undertakes the task of waste management in coordination with the competent authority. Law No. (16) of 2005 regarding the Reorganization of the Environment Agency - Abu Dhabi and its amendments states that the EAD develops the environmental policies.

5. Economic analysis

Single-use plastic makes up approximately 40% of the total plastics nationwide. Abu Dhabi produces 68% of raw materials for single-use materials which are exported outside the country. 12% of these materials are converted from raw materials to single use plastics. The emirate imports about 17% of the single use plastics from the other emirates. The percentage of single use plastics produced and consumed in Abu Dhabi is only 3% of the total quantities of single use plastics produced at the country level. Therefore, the impact of policy on domestic production is generally low.

As for the size of the sector, plastic production in the emirate of Abu Dhabi contributes approximately 15 billion dirhams to GDP (2%), while the production of single-use plastics contributes no more than 700 million dirhams (0.1%) - according to a report from the Statistics Centre Abu Dhabi (SCAD) for the fiscal year 2016. This reinforces the conclusion that the economic impact on the emirate will be generally low.

Finally, this policy does not impact the emirate's exports of single use plastic. It also considers that the effect of the policy on the supply of materials from other emirates is not considered an economic impact on the Emirate of Abu Dhabi.

6. Single use plastic policy vision

In recognition of the need to address environmental issues associated with single use plastic and balance this with the importance of the sector to the UAE economy, our policy vision is:

“to ensure sustainable production and consumption of plastics”.

By reducing consumption of single use plastics, the policy will contribute to the reduction of greenhouse gases consistent with the UAE's Nationally Determined Contributions under the Paris Agreement (2016).

7. Objectives

1. Reducing the use of single-use plastic (and non-plastic) materials and declaring the Emirate of Abu Dhabi free of single-use plastic bags in 2021.

2. Reducing the amount of plastic material that enters the environment.
3. Declaring Abu Dhabi Government free of single-use plastics by the end of 2021.
4. Changing public behaviour towards more sustainable practices.

8. Policy Timeframe

The timeline for this policy is for two years (2020-2022).



9. Policy Actions and Implementation Mechanisms

Table 1: Policy Objectives, Instruments and Time Frame

| Policy Objectives | Instrument | Instrument Type | Duration | Entity | Supporting entities |
|--|---|--|----------|---------------------------------|--|
| Reducing the use of single-use plastic (and non-plastic) materials and declaring the Emirate of Abu Dhabi free of single-use plastic bags by 2021. | Develop a regulation to limit the use of single-use plastic and non-plastic materials by creating gradual procedures to stimulate the reduction of consumption of single-use plastic bags by introducing fees to move towards a total ban on them. the regulation will also introduce fees on items with clear alternatives and a ban on their free distribution to the end consumer. | Strengthening and implementing the legal framework | 2020 | Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi | Department of Economic Development |
| | | | 2020 | Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi | Department of Economic Development |
| | Ban the free distribution of targeted items (for example, by fast food outlets and catering service providers). | | 2020 | Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi | Department of Economic Development and, Department of Municipalities and Transport |
| | Declare Abu Dhabi free from single-use plastic bags in 2021. | | 2021 | Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi | Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi Abu Dhabi Government Media Office |
| | Establish an environment fund for the collected fees to finance environmental activities. | | 2020 | Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi | Department of Finance, Abu Dhabi Executive Council |
| Reducing the amount of plastic material that enters the environment | Conduct debris field surveys of specific marine and terrestrial sites in Abu Dhabi. | Enhancing knowledge | 2020 | Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi | Entities of Abu Dhabi Declaration to clean the marine environment |
| | Conduct an assessment of the plastic quantities in the waste management system in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, and develop the relevant database. | | 2020 | Tadweer | |
| | Conduct economic impact assessment covering all concerned stakeholders or those affected by the policy and propose instruments that contribute to achieving policy objectives. | | 2020 | Department Economic Development | Abu Dhabi Investment Office |

| Policy Objectives | Instrument | Instrument Type | Duration | Entity | Supporting entities |
|---|---|--|-------------|---|---|
| | Develop regulations to reduce littering. | Strengthening and implementing the legal framework | 2020 - 2021 | Department of Municipalities and Transport & Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi | AD Police, Municipalities, Tadweer, DCD, Emirates Nature, AD Ports and fishermen |
| | Establish an incentive-based bottle return scheme | | 2020 | Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi | Tadweer, Department of Economic Development and retailers |
| | Establish an operational system to for the collection of recovered plastic to be available for local investment. | | 2020 | Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi | Department of Economic Development and, Department of Municipalities and Transport & Tadweer |
| | Work with the manufacturing and production sector to shift towards more sustainable plastic products through developing specifications of sustainable materials according to the nature of their use. | | 2020 - 2021 | Abu Dhabi Quality and Conformity Council | Ministry of Climate Change and Environment, Emirates Authority for Standardization and Metrology, Department of Economic Development, Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi, Borouge, Plastic production sector, Industrial Development Bureau |
| Declaring Abu Dhabi Government free will be free of single-use plastics by the end of 2021. | Declare Abu Dhabi government entities free of single-use plastic | Campaigns | 2020 - 2021 | Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi | Abu Dhabi Government entities |
| | Implementation in liaison with procurement departments in each of the government entities. | | | | |
| Changing public behaviour towards more sustainable practices | Develop and implement an integrated media plan and educational and awareness campaigns for all target groups. Implement campaigns in collaboration with the relevant organizations. | Creating and promoting awareness | 2020 - 2021 | Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi | All policy stakeholders |
| | Community engagement programmes targeting residents, to encourage better sustainable practices | | 2020 - 2021 | Department of Community Development | Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi and the private sector |

10. Priorities

Currently, with the absence of an Abu Dhabi baseline and based on a pre-cautionary principle, the policy focuses response on the 16 priority single use plastic items which, with abandoned fishing gear, international studies suggest account for 70% of total marine litter. These include:

1. Plastic bags
2. Cups and lids
3. Cutlery
4. Plates
5. Straws
6. Stirrers
7. Food containers
8. Plastic bottles
9. Cotton buds
10. Crisp packets
11. Sweet wrappers
12. Cigarette butts
13. Wet wipes and sanitary items
14. Sticks for balloons
15. Balloons
16. Microbeads (including nurdles).

10.1 The short-term focus is on eight priority single use plastic items with clear behavioural or sustainable alternatives



Type 1: Single-use plastic bags

Methods in this regard will be progressive - from incentives to fees to full ban. Specifications for multiple-use bags will be developed and fees will be introduced according to these specifications, along with studying the possibility of providing a bag-for-life with a fee for the first time and its replacement for free by retail outlets. The Emirate of Abu Dhabi will be also declared free of single-use plastic bags by 2021.

Type 2-7: Other single use plastic items

They include cups and lids, cutlery (forks, spoons, knives, and chopsticks), plates, straws, and food containers. A fee will be introduced to motivate consumers to change behaviour and use reusable alternatives instead. They will be provided only if requested and will not be distributed free of charge to consumers. Food containers and straws with specific specifications in fast food restaurants will be excluded from the fees until sustainable alternatives are found, and restaurants and catering service providers will be targeted with awareness campaigns on the impacts of using these materials on the environment. EAD will also cooperate with the relevant government entities to include the use of multiple use food containers in the requirements for companies working on government projects.

Type 8: Single-use plastic bottles

A bottle return scheme will be introduced in retail outlets based on the principles of Extended Producer Responsibility, thereby establishing a closed loop system for plastic bottles by 2021. A deposit fee will be introduced in case of a national regulation is developed in this regard.

The Abu Dhabi Government will be declared free of single use of plastic materials according to a regulation to be issued by the Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi which specifies the materials to be phased out. The declaration applies to Abu Dhabi Government entities in their offices, facilities or during activities they carry out in external facilities, e.g in hotels.

Free distribution of single-use plastic items will also be banned in fast food restaurants, catering service providers and other facilities with a similar nature of work.

Revenue from fees will be distributed in accordance with the forthcoming regulation. This is considered one of the main instruments for the policy implementation. An Environment Fund will be established to finance environmental activities and campaigns, which will be funded by these fees or their equivalent.

10.2 Medium term (by 2021) focus is on the transition to a closed loop circular system driven by enhanced recycling; and addressing the next priority plastics with some or no behavioural alternatives.

These materials include cotton buds, crisp packets, sweet wrappers, cigarette butts, wet wipes and sanitary items, sticks for balloons, balloons, and microbeads (including nurdles).

In the medium term, the policy focuses on working with industry and waste stakeholder in Abu Dhabi to transition towards a closed loop circular system for plastic production, recycling and reuse based on the Extended Producer Responsibility principle.

This medium-term policy effort will address the fundamental waste management gap identified in EAD’s State of the Environment Report (2017): a lack of incentives and deterrents and the absence of adequate infrastructure to encourage the proper management and treatment of waste.

- **Wet wipes, balloons, and cigarette butts**

Awareness campaigns on appropriate disposal will be implemented. Sector collaboration to work on alternative non plastic design and a closed loop system by 2021.

- **Crisp packets and sweet wrappers (packets)**

Work will be conducted with the industry on more sustainable design and awareness of appropriate recycling and disposal of these items based on the Extended Producer Responsibility principle and towards a closed loop circular system for these materials by 2021.

- **Microbeads used for beauty products**

They require to be addressed by a special regulation at the national level to prevent their entry into the country when sustainable alternatives are available.

- **Plastic microbeads scattered on the beaches**

The sources of these materials will be studied and managed.

10.3. Long term (2021 and beyond) vision is to have moved to a post single use-plastic era

This phase will ensure the transformation to a closed loop circular system operational in Abu Dhabi Emirate, and a culture of reuse and recycle firmly embedded in society.



11. Compliance

Compliance will be addressed as part of the development of the Single Use Plastic Regulations, by EAD and the introduction of fees and collection mechanisms and the bottle return scheme,

12. Indicators and targets

1. First Indicator: The percentage of reduction in the single-use of plastic bags for each customer, consumed in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi

- **Target:** 100% reduction of these bags from the baseline of 2019.
- **Rationale:** This indicator is a proxy indicator for other types of target material in this policy.

The indicator will be calculated through data collected from major retail outlets through a circulated system, which provides data permanently about the types of bags consumed and their numbers, in cooperation with the Department of Economic Development.

2. Second Indicator: The percentage of the amount of plastic waste collected through a plastic bottle return scheme to the total consumption of these materials.

- **Target:** A 50% collection of this material in 2021 from the baseline of 2019.
- **Rationale:** This indicator measures the amount of plastic waste collected through the return scheme.
- There is no baseline for this indicator yet.

3. Third Indicator: The percentage of government entities that ban single-use plastics in their operations in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi

- **Target:** 100% of government entities in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi.
- **Rationale:** This indicator measures government entities in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi that have banned single-use materials in their operations.

Achievement of these policy targets will help support the achievement of the existing waste policy target of 75% municipal solid waste diverted from landfill by 2021.

