



Republic of Rwanda

RWANDA ENVIRONMENT MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY (REMA)



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

LAW BANNING PLASTIC CARRY BAGS AND OTHER SINGLE USE PLASTIC ITEMS

What is a single-use plastic item?

Plastic item which is designed to be used once before it is thrown away or recycled.

Which single-use plastics have been banned?

The ban applies to all plastic carry bags and other single-use plastic items such as food wrappers/single-use containers, straws, stirrers, forks, spoons, knives, single-use cups, plates, take-away containers, balloons and plastic folders.

What is a plastic carry bag?

This is any plastic bag regardless of its thickness or colour, used at the supermarkets, retail stores, shopping malls and grocery stores, as secondary packages.

What are the major concerns of single-use plastics?

These plastics are manufactured for single use and generally tear or puncture after first use. Some are easily blown away by the wind contributing to roadside and marine litter, causing blockage of waterways, reducing water infiltration capacity of soil, hence contributing to flooding. Most single use plastic items are produced from petroleum oil, and never fully decompose, remaining in the environment as small or even microscopic particles, which contribute to littering, contaminate food chains etc.

Are plastics used for primary industrial packaging also banned by the revised law?

No, plastics used for primary industrial packaging are exempted for packaging in an industrial setting. However, users require a special authorization and the plastics must be labelled clearly by the industry manufacturing the product.

Is the manufacture of single-use plastic items and carry bags for export allowed?

No, except if they are needed for industrial primary packaging as mentioned in question 5 above.

Will retailers be allowed to use up existing stocks of single-use items?

Yes, retailers will be allowed to clear stocks but required to declare all the remaining stocks to Rwanda Environment Management Authority (REMA) after the law has been published.

Is there any exemption for PET bottles?

The use of PET bottles is allowed upon authorisation from REMA. Details on how to apply can be found in exemption guidelines found at the REMA web site – www.rema.gov.rw

Is there any exemption for plastic carry bags?

Yes. Carry bags made from home compostable plastics and woven polypropylene (10 x 10 cm and above) are allowed.

Why are carry bags made from home compostable plastics and woven polypropylene exempted?

Home compostable plastics do not need any special conditions to decompose, so they can undergo decomposition in natural conditions, hence no harm to the environment. Woven Polypropylene are multiple-use in nature, hence do not contribute much to littering.

Are non-woven plastic carry bags banned?

Yes, non-woven plastic carry bags are banned because they cannot be easily recycled.

Is the use of Oxo-degradable plastics allowed?

No. Oxo-degradable plastics often also referred to as oxo-biodegradable, photo-degradable, thermo-degradable, oxo-fragmentable or pro-oxidant additive containing plastics are banned as an application of the precautionary principle. Enormous research has proved that they simply fragment into microplastics which cause more environmental and health problems, hence they will be considered as any other single-use plastic material.

Are duty-free bags exempted?

Yes, duty free bags are not affected by the ban, though their use is restricted within the duty free shop, and they should not be available for sale or use within the Rwandan market. Furthermore any traveler coming into Rwanda with duty-free bags shall be required to dispose them of at the entry points or in the aircrafts prior to disembarking their flights.

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