

A BAN ON PLASTIC CARRIER BAGS IN MEDITERRANEAN AREA

CONSIDERING,

Unep states that *"marine litter in the Mediterranean is a confirmed critical issue. The problem is exacerbated by the basin's limited exchanges with other oceans, its densely populated coasts, highly developed tourism, 30% of the world's maritime traffic passing through and various additional inputs of litter from rivers and very urbanized areas."*

Plastic bags emergency. In the European Union, around 100 billion plastic bags are put on the market each year (equivalent to 190 million tons of oil consumption). Many end up in the seas or on the coast. In Mediterranean Sea an estimated 25 million plastic bags pollute every 1,000 kilometres of coast, more than 1,1 trillion for 46000 kilometres of the Mediterranean Sea per year. Total consumption of PE (HD and LD, high and low density) estimate more than 25 millions of tons in EMEA countries and low price of NAFTA pushed production and consumption in the last six months.

Plastic bags in Mediterranean coast and sea. In 2015, from April to May, was conducted a BEACH LITTER survey within "Clean-up the Med 2015", with the contribute of many associations: 54 Mediterranean beaches (Algeria, Croatia, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain, Turkey, and Tunisia) were studied recording the quantity and types of waste on shore. The most common material found was plastic (between 50 and 80% of the waste found) and plastic bag item, in particular, was recorded more frequently in no italian beaches. This phenomenon may likely be explained, in part, because of the Italian ban on traditional plastic bags (a factor not present in other countries).

In 2016 Legambiente's Green Schooner, has monitored the presence of floating garbage in the Italian seas: 95.7% consists of plastics and plastic bags was one of the most spotted waste (16.2%).

About impacts on coastal and marine ecosystems. Sea turtles, birds, and marine mammals may be trapped or suffocate due to marine litter; according to some studies, 79.6 % of sea turtles die because of waste ingestion. Additionally, micro-plastics ingested by aquatic organisms are also the main cause of the introduction of plastics in biota and of the imbalance in the marine food chain. Furthermore according to the report 2016 Marine Litter Vital Graphics **the cost associated to impacts on marine ecosystems** could be estimated at least 8 billion dollars per year, considering the revenue loss to fisheries and aquaculture and the marine tourism industries, plus the cost of cleaning up plastic litter on beaches.

Prevention first. Mismanaged waste is reported in every sea and is mainly due to the packaging, (in particular plastic disposable). The percentage is 56% in stranded waste and 83% in floating litter. Prevention is the most important action. The main prevention measures must concern economic incentives for producer and costumer, improving depuration technologies, collection and fishing litter and **"outlawing", about primary microplastics** (for example plastic microbeads employed in scrubs, toothpaste and beauty products) **or plastic bags.**

THE GLOBAL DEMAND TO BAN PLASTIC BAGS IN MEDITERRANEAN,

Numerous countries and cities around the world have taken measures to reduce the consumption of plastic carrier bags. Total or partial bans (e.g. Italy, France, China, South Africa, Kenya, Rwanda, Congo, Bangladesh, Côte d'Ivoire, Morocco, Tunisia, California and several states of Australia and India; Washington DC, Chicago and other cities in the United States, and Walloon Region in Belgium); bans on free provision (Mexico, Hong Kong) and levies (South Korea), as well as voluntary agreements (New Zealand, Japan, São Paulo state in Brazil).

After the Italian ban of 2011, EU Commission started a long way procedure reaching a new Directive (EU) 2015/720 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2015 amending Directive 94/62/EC as regards reducing the consumption of lightweight plastic carrier bags.

The new Directive set ambitious targets for reducing plastic carrier bags consumption.

To promote sustained reductions of the average consumption level of lightweight plastic carrier bags, Member States should take measures to significantly reduce the consumption of lightweight plastic carrier bags in line with the overall objectives of the Union's waste policy and the waste hierarchy as provided for in Directive 2008/98/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council. Such reduction measures should take account of current consumption levels of plastic carrier bags in individual Member States, with higher levels requiring more ambitious efforts, and take account of reductions already achieved.

Measures to be taken by Member States may involve the use of economic instruments such as pricing, taxes and levies, which have proved particularly effective in reducing the consumption of plastic carrier bags, and marketing restrictions such as bans in derogation of Article 18 of Directive 94/62/EC.

The Italian legislation has permitted to acquire best performances in environmental and economical perspectives. After five years of ban of plastic carrier bags below 100 micron consumption of PE has been reduced by 55%, from more than 200.000 tons to 90.000 tons with a positive transition to compostable carrier bags that are vital for develop and improve the separate collection of food waste.

In terms of CO₂ the reduction has acquired more than 900.000 CO₂ tons (foot print of PE is near 6 kg CO₂ per kg and bioplastics for compostable bags is near 3kg CO₂ per kg) but, if we considered the end of waste in biodigestion and composting plant, the balance dramatically improve.

ASK TO IMPLEMENT ASAP

- Coordinate a ban on plastic carrier bags below 100 microns except bags for primary transport (i.e. fisheries) and biodegradable and compostable certified EN 13432 or ISO 14855
- A ban on microbeads used in cosmetics and cleaning products
- A ban on cotton buds non biodegradable and compostable certified EN 13432 or ISO 14855
- Define a plan for reduction and recycling of plastic in all sector, from primary sector to retail with mandatory goals
- An international campaign to improve separate collection of urban waste with a specific focus on domestic and commercial food waste
- Funding for biodigesters and composting plant as a infrastructure for climate adaption