

Bill passed for regulating disposable plastic tableware and other plastic products and enhancing existing producer responsibility schemes

The Government noted that the Legislative Council today (October 18) passed the Product Eco-responsibility (Amendment) Bill 2023 for regulating disposable plastic tableware and other plastic products, and for enhancing two existing producer responsibility schemes (PRS).

The main regulations on disposable plastic tableware and other plastic products under the Amendment Bill include:

1. Regulation of disposable plastic tableware

The Amendment Bill prohibits the local sale of nine types of disposable plastic tableware, and prohibits catering premises from providing customers with such products, with implementation carried out in two phases. In the first-phase regulation, the sale of expanded polystyrene (EPS) tableware and four other types of disposable plastic tableware that are small in size and difficult to recycle or to which there are mature alternatives will be prohibited, and so will the provision of such tableware to takeaway customers. Moreover, the provision of all nine types of disposable plastic tableware to dine-in customers at catering premises will be prohibited. The regulation will be fully implemented in the second phase. Details are summarised as follows:

Types of disposable plastic tableware	Phase 1	Phase 2
EPS tableware, straws, stirrers, cutlery (forks, knives, spoons), plates	Prohibits the sale to end-customers	
	Prohibits the provision at catering premises to customers for dine-in and takeaway services	
Cups	Prohibits the provision at catering premises to customers for dine-in services	Prohibits the sale to end-customers;
Cup lids		Prohibits the provision at catering premises to customers for dine-in and takeaway services
Food containers		
Food container covers		

2. Other plastic products

The Amendment Bill also regulates the manufacturing, selling and distributing of a series of disposable plastic products, which will also be

implemented in two phases. In the first phase, it is proposed to ban the sale and provision of those products that either have established non-plastic alternatives or are not necessities. Hotels and guesthouses are banned from providing disposable toiletries and in-room plastic-bottled water for free. Moreover, the manufacturing, selling and free distribution of oxo-degradable plastics products are banned. The phased regulation on various types of plastic products is summarised below:

Control measures	Disposable plastic products	
	Phase 1	Phase 2
Ban sale and free distribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cotton buds • balloon sticks • inflatable cheer sticks • glow sticks • party hats • oxo-degradable plastic products (regardless of disposability) • umbrella bags • food sticks • plastic toothpicks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • multipack rings • table cloths • plastic stemmed dental floss
Ban free distribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • hotel and guesthouse toiletries (including plastic-handled toothbrushes, plastic-packed toothpaste, shower caps, razors, nail files, combs, as well as shampoo, body wash, conditioners, body lotions and hand sanitisers packed in disposable plastic containers) and plastic-bottled water provided in hotel rooms • plastic-packaged tissue paper for promotional use • non-medical use transparent gloves 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ear plugs
Ban manufacturing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • oxo-degradable plastic products (regardless of disposability) 	

A spokesman for the Environment and Ecology Bureau said, "To allow the trade to get prepared, we will commence the first-phase regulation around six months after the passage of the Amendment Bill. We propose to implement the first-phase regulation from April 22, 2024, in support of Earth Day. The timing of implementing the second-phase regulation will depend on the availability and affordability of the relevant non-plastic or reusable alternatives, and it is tentatively set for 2025. We encourage the trade to get prepared early for the relevant control measures, and jointly build a plastic-free culture."

To facilitate the adoption of non-plastic tableware in lieu of disposable plastic ones by the trade, the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) has commissioned the Hong Kong Quality Assurance Agency to set up an online information platform for reference by the food and beverage trade, tableware suppliers and the public. The platform

(www.greentableware.hk/en-us/) has been accepting applications from tableware suppliers since November last year. Currently, more than 400 non-plastic disposable tableware products are listed on the platform. The platform also provides information on tableware rental and cleaning services to encourage restaurants to adopt reusable tableware and further reduce waste. Moreover, the EPD is establishing an information platform on disposable plastics to share with the public the characteristics and pros and cons of different alternatives for the public to make well-informed choices. The department will continue to promote reduction of disposable plastic tableware through different channels so as to reduce waste at source. For instance, it launched the Bring Your Own Containers Eateries Scheme last month to encourage the general public to develop the good habit of bringing their own containers when ordering takeaways. Currently, more than 350 restaurants have participated in the scheme.

In addition, the Amendment Bill expands the coverage of the PRS on waste electrical and electronic equipment to include refrigerators and washing machines with larger capacities as well as stand-alone clothes dryers and dehumidifiers. It also removes the requirements in relation to the provision of recycling labels in the distribution of regulated electrical equipment so as to streamline the operation. This amendment is expected to be implemented on July 1, 2024. Moreover, the Amendment Bill also optimises the operation of the PRS on glass beverage containers.

For details of the Amendment Bill, please visit www.legco.gov.hk/en/legco-business/council/bills.html?bill_key=10010&session=2023.