

SUSTAINABLE RESOURCE USAGE – PLASTICS BRIEFING PAPER – May 2019

Sodexo is committed to reducing our impact on the environment through a set of commitments and actions highlighted within our corporate responsibility roadmap, Better Tomorrow 2025. One key focus area of Better Tomorrow 2025 is **preventing waste**; which covers our global commitment to reduce our carbon emissions (food and packaging waste being the single biggest contributor to Sodexo's global carbon footprint); and to champion sustainable resource usage.

In the last few years, **throw away or single use plastic packaging** has created significant environmental issue around the world. Single use plastics, including plastic packaging, bags and Styrofoam make up 26% of global plastics production and are the bulk of the plastics pollution problem that ends up in landfills, incinerators or worse, littering the oceans, waterways, and communities.

At present, the use of **disposable plastic packaging** is an important element of food and retail services; providing food security, helping to reduce product damage and therefore reducing waste, while at the same time presenting a cheap form of consumer convenience particularly with the popularity in 'to go' food and drink. In January, 2018, the Ellen MacArthur Foundation announced at the World Economic Forum that 11 leading brands, retailers, and packaging companies will work towards 100% reusable, recyclable or compostable packaging by 2025 or earlier.

Typical food service products include containers, boxes, cups, bowls, cutlery, utensils, wraps, bags, lids, straws and stirrers, which are all made from different material types such as plastic, styrene foam, paper, metal and bio-resins (from corn, sugar cane, potatoes).

There are wider **environmental impacts** of single use plastic with the depletion of non-renewable resource such as fossil fuels in the manufacturing process, the generation of air and water pollutants from manufacturing, shipping and disposal and the introduction of toxic chemicals into the environment during production, use and disposal.

Legislative and regulatory requirements around waste and plastics continue to increase. For example, part of the European Strategy for Plastics in a Circular Economy, calls for legislation the European Union to ban single use plastic items, at some point of time in the future. In **2016, France** passed a **law to ensure all plastic cups, cutlery and plates can be composted and are made of biologically-sourced materials**. The law comes into effect in **2020**.

All the above, points to the need to take proactive steps to reduce single use plastics within business. However, it should be noted that there is no one solution to reducing a company's "plastic footprint". Further, consumers and clients are increasingly looking for businesses that are taking demonstrable action on the complex problem of plastic waste.

At Sodexo we have:

As an employer,

- reissued our Health, Safety and Environment Policy highlighting that our “client services and end user experiences are safe, healthy, environmentally responsible and contribute to improving Quality of Life”;
- taken steps to provide training and education for our employees on sustainable practices that include food and packaging waste;
- launched internal innovation challenges to collect and reward employees’ initiatives and best practices that have a positive impact on the environment and promoted the sharing of environmental initiatives and innovations developed by our employees;
- a Corporate Responsibility company-wide commitment to **eliminate avoidable waste to landfill by 2025**. This covers both organic (food) and non-organic (packaging, disposables...) waste.
- Reduce food waste associated with packaged retail products, to reduce not only food but also plastic waste.

As a service provider

- implemented a major waste prevention strategy moving conversations and engagement with relevant stakeholders on waste, to conversations about resources which incorporate the principles of the circular economy;
- in conjunction with some clients, transformed some sites into “waste free sites”. A site where waste is treated as a resource and all opportunities to prevent, reuse, recycle or repurpose are maximized;
- countries or regions have made **commitments to phase out single use plastics at least by 2025**, with a focus on prioritizing the highest volume items. As of April 2019, **16 countries** have committed to **reduce single-use plastic**, representing **close to 70% of our revenues**. For example:
 - the United Kingdom & Ireland, Sodexo has banned the purchase of all plastic straws and stirrers, and committed to phase out single use plastic bags and polystyrene foam items such as cups, lids and food containers by 2020. Sodexo has also committed that by 2025, 90% of its waste will be recycled or reused.
 - In North America, Sodexo has committed to eliminate plastic bags and stirrers by 2019 and implement a request-only policy on plastic straws for customers who need them. Polystyrene foam cups, lids, and containers will be the go next in 2025.
- undertaken a major global study on key single use plastic items used within our business and launched a European tender to replace plastic disposables by more environmentally friendly alternative products;
- included into our catalogues alternate sustainable products and substitute items that, subject to the client’s agreement, can replace single use plastic items;
- included in our Corporate Responsibility annual site and country survey, questions related to single use plastic items and the actions already undertaken by sites;
- integrated waste management and in particular plastic removal/replacement as a basic as part of many of its service offers from various segments;
- conducted WasteLESS Week, Sodexo’s annual worldwide consumer and employee engagement campaign at our sites which aims to tackle one of the biggest issues facing our planet: the environmental cost of waste. The five-day October event engages our teams, clients and consumers around waste prevention, sharing site-level results and encouraging recycling;

- worked with our technical advisers World Wildlife Fund (WWF) on the development of strategic actions concerning plastic and the joint communication on our actions.

As a corporate citizen

- led the creation of the International Food Waste Coalition which is focused on food and packaging waste all along the value chain;
- our Chief Executive Officer signed the Champions 12.3 commitment to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 12.3 which aims to reduce per capita food waste, including food packaging by 50% by 2030;
- are working with suppliers and startups on specific initiatives and innovations that could have a positive impact on plastic and plastic use.

It is important to reemphasize that the most sustainable option related to plastics is to **prevent packaging** in the first instance.

Waste is just a case of bad design. We must move away from single-use disposable products and towards durable, reusable, recyclable and repairable goods. Some of the worst contributors to our waste crisis are single-use disposable items, like coffee cups, straws, plastic bags, foam takeout containers and water bottles.

If packaging is necessary, it must be of a type that is designed to be reused, recycled and/or recovered. Actions when dealing with waste should be in that same order as the preferred methods of treatment.

There are other key actions we must take such as **changing our behaviors** and adopting the best practices highlighted above, as it will reduce our waste contributions significantly. It's why Sodexo also has a Corporate Responsibility commitment to ensure that all our employees will be trained in environmental sustainable practices.



In FY18 - 49.2% of Sodexo sites provided training in environmental sustainable practices.

As part of the ongoing waste strategy **responsible sourcing** plays an important role. Making changes to purchasing practices, by assessing if there is an option to purchase in bulk or with less packaging or whether more widely recyclable or environmentally friendly products are available is a major element of plastic waste prevention. Reviewing the types of plastics within our supply chain.

Working with suppliers on innovative solutions and understanding the opportunities for more sustainable plastics from renewable sources. Partnering with a range of stakeholders such as clients, suppliers and waste management services companies to ensure robust and sustainable waste streams are put into place in the communities where we operate.

A rich and resourceful planet is indispensable for quality of life in the long term. This is why Sodexo looks after the environment and why we must all be committed to leaving a healthier planet.

Other reference

Sodexo and the Circular Economy – Position paper available on [Sodexo.com](https://www.sodexo.com)