



**environment, forestry
& fisheries**

Department:
Environment, Forestry and Fisheries
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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NATIONAL COUNCIL OF PROVINCES

(For written reply)

QUESTION NO. 60 {CW36E}

INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO. 4 of 2021

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Mr A Arnolds (Western Cape: EFF) to ask the Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment:

Whether her department is taking any actions to promote plastic alternatives such as (a) plant fibre material or (b) paper packets, given that not enough plastic is being recycled which ends up in landfills; if not, why not; if so, (i) what actions and (ii) what are the further relevant details?

60. THE MINISTER OF FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT REPLIES:

(a) and (b)

The Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries (DEFF) is taking action to promote products that can be utilised for an extended period in the economy with minimal environmental impact as informed by the Life Cycle Sustainability Assessment. This approach is in line with the circular economy and the reuse element of the waste management hierarchy which is a cornerstone of the National Waste Management Strategy, 2020. Products that have a short-term life span (e.g. plastic based single use products) are increasingly being discouraged through waste management policy development and implementation action as follows:

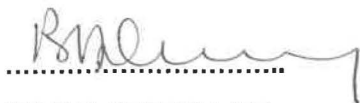
- The market based instrument (plastic bag levy) implemented jointly with National Treasury provides a disincentive for the increased consumption of plastic bags and conversely promoting bags made from alternative materials; and
- In terms of extended producer responsibility government has identified amongst others plastic packaging and some plastic single use products for implementing mandatory schemes for collection and management of post-consumer waste generated. The regulatory control of these plastic products come with obligations and compliance duties that do not apply to the other non-plastic alternatives that are not regulated.

In May 2020, the CSIR conducted a Life Cycle Sustainability Assessment of alternative carrier bag options in South Africa. The goal of the study was to compare different types of carrier bags that are (or could be) offered by South African retailers, in terms of environmental and socio-economic performance across the product life cycle. The study assessed 16 types of carrier bags made from a range of different materials.

According to the findings, the best performing bag overall was the reusable plastic bag – also made from high-density polyethylene (HDPE) but thicker and stronger (70 microns) than the standard 24 micron single-use bag. While single-use bags ranked lower, the best performing among them was the standard 24 micron HDPE plastic bag with 100% recycled content. Among the 24 micron HDPE bags, the higher the recycled content, the better the overall performance of the bag.

From the above recommendations, DEFF formulated the amendment regulations making provision for a phased-in increased recycle content. Plastic carrier bags and plastic flat bags must be made from a minimum of 50% post-consumer recycle from 01 January 2023; 75% post-consumer recycle from 01 January 2025; and 100% post-consumer recycle from 01 January 2027.

Regards



**MS B D CREECY, MP
MINISTER OF FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT**

DATE: 11 / 3 / 2021