

RECOMMENDATIONS

to address the escalating plastic crisis in Armenia

Suggestions for enhancing current legislation governing the production of plastics and plastic products, as well as the generation and management of plastic waste

In light of the requirements of the CEPA Agreement¹ on “Preparation of waste management plans in accordance with the five-stage waste hierarchy and waste prevention programs,” the legislation should incorporate the European concepts of waste hierarchy and the circular economy.

The list of Armenia’s waste management obligations under CEPA includes the following item: “By 2024, establish a full cost recovery mechanism in accordance with the polluter pays principle and the extended producer responsibility principle.”²

A deposit system for plastic bottles allows for the recovery and recycling of these materials. Additionally, the deposit system incorporates a compensatory element that encourages consumer participation by providing a financial incentive to return plastic bottles to recyclers or other intermediary organizations after use. In countries with deposit systems, the collection and recycling rates for plastic range from 50% to 97%.³ Implementing this mechanism in Armenia will help reduce the number of plastic bottles. To achieve this, it is essential to establish pertinent legal norms. These legal norms should also encompass relevant institutions, such as extended producer or importer responsibility, waste sorting, and accountability.

In fact, the revenues generated from the legally levied environmental tax for waste disposal should be used solely for waste utilization and reduction activities. Regarding the initiative on the deposit system for plastic bottles, the aforementioned instrument could aid local governments in implementing the deposit system and attracting an operator for it.

It is necessary to introduce an environmental levy for waste disposal and differentiate rates

1 Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement between Armenia and the European Union ([https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:22018A0126\(01\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:22018A0126(01))),

2 Annexes and Protocols to the EU-Armenia Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement Annexes and Protocols to the EU-Armenia Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement)

3 YSU. *Materials of the Scientific Conference of the Department of Professors of the Faculty of Law of Yerevan State University*. (2020) [Online]. Yerevan State University, 1(3) 2019. Available at: http://www.old.yసు.am/files/12law_gitajoxov_2019.pdf [Accessed August 16, 2024].

depending on the degree of waste hazard.

It is essential to offer incentives to businesses and organizations that reduce waste generation, implement low-waste technologies in production, and collect, store, and deliver waste regarded as secondary raw materials.

Inappropriate application of the “polluter pays” principle leads to reduced accountability among citizens and organizations, resulting in inadequate compensation for costs, including those related to the negative impacts of waste. Currently, the “polluter pays” principle is not adequately reflected in Armenia’s legislative framework. Under the CEPA implementation framework, two approaches are being considered in Armenia to legislate the promotion of the “polluter pays” principle. The first entails revising or adding to the relevant existing legislation, such as the law “On Nature Protection and Natural Waste Processing.” The second approach is the establishment of a separate law, which appears to be a more effective strategy. Emphasis should be placed on preventing problematic or excessive plastic packaging through innovative solutions or new delivery models. Where reuse is practical and suitable, reusable options should be implemented to minimize single-use waste packaging.

The state is called upon to provide the most favorable conditions for further development of the high-quality secondary raw materials market.

Recommendations for the relevant government agencies to ensure safe production, recycling and utilization

- Ensure the safe disposal of those types of plastic that are not suitable for reuse or recycling
- Establish safety standards for the disposal of plastic waste
- Hold manufacturers accountable for the ultimate fate of their products.
- Establish standards for plastic product production to ensure they can be easily separated and recycled.
- Encourage the development of infrastructure for collecting and recycling plastic waste while stimulating demand.
- Promote the use of Post Consumer Recycled (PCR) materials by manufacturers, as endorsed by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO).

Recommendations for manufacturers to promote safe alternatives:

Safe alternatives to plastic are glass, ceramics, stainless steel, metal, wood, natural fabrics, and paper. Therefore, it is necessary to:

- Minimize the production of single-use and non-recyclable plastic products
- Explore alternatives
- Choose recycled plastic free from toxic substances that pose risks to human health and the environment.
- If there’s no assurance that recycled plastic is safe, do not use it for children’s products and food containers.

Recommendations for consumers

- Rejection of plastic wherever possible
- Use reusable containers when dining outside the home
- Utilize reusable items

- Actively participate in waste separation
- Join the effort to clean up plastic from local water bodies.

- Leverage social media to raise awareness about the negative impacts of plastic on human health and the environment.

- Drink tap water (in Armenia, water meets safety standards)

Recommendations for the public sector

The public can help promote safe alternatives and the rejection of single-use plastic through projects and initiatives aimed at:

- Raising awareness among the population
- Supporting initiatives to prevent the use of recycled plastic material containing toxic substances for children's products, clothing, or products that come into contact with food or beverages.
- Calling for transparency of information about toxic additives in plastics;

Working with the media and social networks is also necessary. To attract the attention of decision-makers, these issues should be raised at public events, individual meetings, etc.

CONTACTS

Armenian Women for Health and Healthy Environment
www.awhhe.am
officeawhhe@awhhe.am

Health and Environment Justice Support (HEJSupport)
info@hej-support.org

Follow us on LinkedIn:
<https://bit.ly/3A0L93C>

HEJSupport Website:
www.hej-support.org

More information about the project:
www.hej-support/ecca-plastic



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