



MEDIA RELEASE

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MINIMUM CHARGE FOR DISPOSABLE CARRIER BAGS AT SUPERMARKETS TO BE IMPLEMENTED TO ENCOURAGE MORE SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION

Bag charge developed after more than a year of extensive engagement and consultations

Singapore, 7 March 2022 – To strive towards a Zero Waste Nation, a charge for disposable carrier bags at supermarkets will come into effect in mid-2023. The Ministry of Sustainability and the Environment (MSE) and the National Environment Agency (NEA) hope that this charge, which complements ongoing efforts to promote sustainable consumption like the Say YES to Waste Less campaign, will encourage a shift towards more sustainable habits and lifestyles, including the practice of shoppers bringing their own bags and reducing the use of disposable carrier bags.

Details of the Bag Charge

2 Larger supermarket operators will be required to charge a minimum of five cents for each disposable carrier bag¹ provided for purchases at their physical stores. The minimum charge has been kept low to moderate the cost impact on shoppers while encouraging them to be mindful of the number of disposable carrier bags they take.

3 NEA strongly encourages supermarket operators to use the collected proceeds to support charitable programmes or sustainability-related initiatives. NEA will engage supermarket operators on adopting initiatives to lessen the potential impact of the charge, such as encouraging shoppers to bring their own bags. This allows supermarket operators the autonomy to decide how best to apply the proceeds, which may include their ongoing charitable programmes or bring-your-own-bag incentives. To uphold accountability and transparency in the use of the proceeds, supermarket operators will be required to publish information on the number of bags issued, amount of proceeds received from the bag charge, and how the proceeds are used.

4 The charge will apply to disposable carrier bags of all material types. Whether they are made of paper, plastic or degradable materials, disposables have an impact on the environment during their production, transportation and disposal. In addition, disposable carrier bags used in Singapore are either recycled or incinerated. As they are not landfilled directly, the potential environmental benefits of using biodegradable materials (e.g. paper) cannot be realised in Singapore. Applying the charge only to carrier bags of certain materials

¹ Disposable carrier bags are bags with handles, such as t-shirt bags or die-cut/punched handle bags; disposable non-carrier bags such as flat top plastic bags for bagging fresh produce or meat/seafood – would not be subject to the mandatory charge.

(e.g. plastic) may result in undesirable behaviours which will not benefit the environment, such as switching to a material that is not subjected to a charge. Consequently, we do not differentiate between the types of disposable carrier bags and shoppers are encouraged to reduce their use of all disposable carrier bags.

5 For a start, this requirement will apply to supermarket operators with an annual turnover of more than S\$100 million, as they would be more well-resourced to implement the requirements. This covers about two thirds of all supermarket outlets in Singapore, including NTUC FairPrice, Cold Storage, Giant, Sheng Siong and Prime supermarket outlets.² Supermarket operators with an annual turnover of less than S\$100 million may implement their own bag charges, which many retailers have already done.

Nation-wide Consultations

6 The bag charge framework was developed after more than a year of extensive engagement and consultations with the industry and the public. A Citizens' Workgroup (CWG) on Reducing Excessive Consumption of Disposables was convened in September 2020, comprising 55 individuals from diverse backgrounds, ages, and professions. One of the recommendations by the CWG was a disposable carrier bag charge. After careful deliberation of the CWG's recommendations, MSE and NEA commenced consultations to develop an appropriate charging model for disposable carrier bags at supermarkets in Singapore.

7 NEA consulted close to 6,000 stakeholders from the industry and the public, including those from low-income groups and members from the social services sector. The consultations included public surveys, engagement and focus group sessions, as well as a REACH consultation paper with proposed details of the disposable carrier bag charge for further public feedback in January and February 2022.

8 Based on NEA's survey³ of around 1,000 Singapore residents in September 2021, close to 90 per cent agreed that they had a part to play in reducing the usage of disposable bags. More than 80 per cent agreed that the excessive use of disposable bags had a negative impact on the environment. In addition, more than 70 per cent agreed that a mandatory charge would reduce the usage of such bags.

9 A common concern raised at public consultations was that households would continue to require disposable bags to bag their waste. The disposable bag charge will not remove the public's access to disposable bags. Disposable bags, including those for the bagging of fresh produce such as fruits and fish, will still be available from supermarkets as well as other retail outlets and online shopping delivery. Residents should continue with the responsible practice of bagging waste before disposal. Refer to **Annex I** for an infographic about commonly asked questions regarding the bag charge.

Building a Greener Singapore Together

10 Climate action and environmental protection are gaining pace internationally and locally and we cannot continue with business as usual. A bag charge is becoming commonplace in jurisdictions around the world, including Malaysia, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. In Singapore, an increasing number of local retailers have implemented a disposable carrier bag charge, which has been shown to be effective in reducing the use of bags.

² Based on 2020 financial data declared by supermarket operators.

³ A randomised sampling was used to select respondents for the survey.

11 The disposable carrier bag charge at supermarkets is thus a key nation-wide behavioural nudge for us to consume more sustainably. It forms part of our overall efforts to reduce disposables and packaging waste generated by companies and consumers. Refer to **Annex II** for details on these government efforts. Each of us must recognise the impact of our actions on the environment, and play our part to adopt more sustainable habits. This will bring us closer to our vision of becoming a Zero Waste Nation, contributing towards our Singapore Green Plan 2030 goal to reduce the amount of waste sent to landfill per capita per day by 20 per cent by 2026, and 30 per cent by 2030. Together, we can build a greener and more resource-conscious Singapore, and preserve our environment for future generations.

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About the National Environment Agency

The National Environment Agency (NEA) is the leading public organisation responsible for ensuring a clean and sustainable environment for Singapore. Its key roles are to improve and sustain a clean environment, promote sustainability and resource efficiency, maintain high public health standards, provide timely and reliable meteorological information, and encourage a vibrant hawker culture. NEA works closely with its partners and the community to develop and spearhead environmental and public health initiatives and programmes. It is committed to motivating every individual to care for the environment as a way of life, in order to build a liveable and sustainable Singapore for present and future generations.

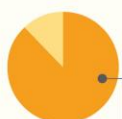
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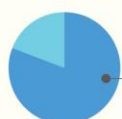
Commonly Asked Questions about the Disposable Carrier Bag Charge at Supermarkets

Disposable Carrier Bag Charge At Supermarkets

Based on NEA's survey of around 1,000 Singapore residents in September 2021:



Close to **90%** agreed they had a part to play in reducing the usage of disposable bags



More than **80%** agreed that the excessive use of disposable bags affects the environment



More than **70%** felt that a mandatory charge would reduce usage of disposable bags

Frequently Asked Questions About the Disposable Carrier Bag Charge



Why can't supermarkets use biodegradable or paper bags instead?

- Disposables have an impact on the environment when made and disposed of, regardless of material type. This includes paper and biodegradable bags.
- Switching to such bags would not change user behaviour and reduce usage.
- In Singapore, disposable bags are either recycled or incinerated, not landfilled directly. The potential environmental benefits of biodegradable materials cannot be realised here.



Has NEA considered how the charge may impact low-income families?

- The minimum charge has been kept low to moderate the cost impact, while encouraging shoppers to be mindful of how many disposable carrier bags they take.
- NEA will engage supermarket operators to use the proceeds for good causes including those that support low-income families, and to adopt initiatives to lessen the potential impact of the charge, such as encouraging shoppers to bring their own bags.



How will I bag my waste for disposal?

- Disposable bags, including those for bagging fresh produce such as fruits and fish, will still be available from supermarkets, other retail outlets and online shopping delivery.
- Everyone should continue with the responsible practice of bagging waste before disposal.



What will supermarket operators do with the money they collect from the bag charge?

- Supermarket operators are strongly encouraged to use collected proceeds to support charitable programmes or sustainability-related initiatives.
- For greater accountability and transparency, they will also be required to publish information on the number of bags issued, amount of proceeds collected, and how these proceeds are used.

How else is NEA reducing disposable and packaging waste?

- Our efforts range from enhancing public education and awareness, to behavioural nudges, to addressing packaging waste generated by companies.
- Some examples are the nation-wide 'Say YES to Waste Less' campaign and the Mandatory Packaging Reporting framework.



For more information, please visit www.nea.gov.sg

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February 2022



Government's Efforts to Reduce Disposables and Packaging Waste

In 2019 and 2020, households and trade premises in Singapore threw away about 200,000 tonnes of disposables annually. This is enough to fill up about 400 Olympic-sized swimming pools. Disposable bags⁴ make up approximately two-thirds of this. We should reduce the use of disposables as it uses up more resources than necessary, and adds to Singapore's carbon emissions when the bags are incinerated in our waste-to-energy plants.

2 Since 2019, NEA has been running the 'Say YES to Waste Less' campaign. The campaign aims to increase public awareness on the need to reduce excessive consumption of disposables and outlines the simple actions that can be taken to do so, such as bringing your own bags and food containers. Stores such as Cold Storage, CS Fresh, Jasons supermarkets, Prime, Sheng Siong, 7-Eleven, Guardian, Evergreen Stationery, Greendot, KOI, and LIHO TEA have visual and verbal prompts at various touchpoints to reduce the use of disposable bags. Retailers such as Herbal Pharm, a health store; Love Bonito, a fashion store; Timberland; and Amudhini Minimart offer discounts when customers bring their own bag. F&B establishments such as SaladStop!, Starbucks, HEYTEA, Kraftwich, and Guilt Cookie also offer discounts when customers bring their own cups or containers.

3 NEA has also introduced measures to address packaging waste generated by companies. Under the Mandatory Packaging Reporting (MPR) framework, producers of packaged products, such as brand owners, manufacturers and importers, as well as retailers such as supermarkets with an annual turnover of more than \$10 million, are required to collect packaging data and develop plans to reduce, reuse or recycle packaging for annual submission to NEA. The MPR will focus companies' attention on the packaging that they are placing on the market, including carrier bags provided to consumers at the point of sales, and increase their awareness of the potential for reducing packaging use in their operations.

4 The MPR will pave the way for the implementation of an Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) framework for packaging waste management. Under the EPR, producers will play a more direct role in ensuring that the packaging waste generated from their products is managed in an environmentally sustainable manner. To this end, producers will be made responsible for the proper end-of-life management of packaging supplied in Singapore.

⁴ Disposable bags comprise paper bags, plastic bags from various sources (e.g., supermarkets, pharmacies, retail stores, F&B outlets, etc.), plastic trash bags and poly-mailer bags. Data is based on the annual waste characterisation studies conducted by NEA and the amount of domestic & trade waste disposed of at the waste-to-energy plants.