

Hilma Svalander
6 March 2019

Proposal

If you take a look around you, try to spot something made out of plastic. Pretty easy right? When you no longer need the plastic that you see, what do you do with it? Throw it in the trash bag, that also is made of plastic. Where does this then go? If you live in Europe it's a 30% chance that it gets recycled, if you live in the US the chance is 9% and in the rest of the world even lower. Which makes the plastic likely to end up in a landfill (Gourmelon, 2015). However, every year roughly 10-20 million tons of plastic reach the world's oceans and it is estimated that 5.25 trillion plastic particles with a weight of 268 940 tons are floating in our oceans as of 2015 (Gourmelon, 2015) (Eriksen et al, 2015). These plastic particles and plastic waste that reach our oceans are filled with toxins and cause harm to the marine life but also humans. Whales, fish, sea birds and dolphins can get tangled up in plastic nets or bags. Plastic particles are ingested by fish that rise in the food chain until it reaches humans, carrying chemical toxins into our diet. How can plastic waste in the oceans be stopped from harming marine life, humans and the environment?

There are multiple solutions to how plastic waste in the oceans can be stopped. Actions can be taken by individuals to recycle more and buy less plastic. This though, requires access to effective recycling systems and there need to be options to, for example, store food. A customer will not leave the store without milk or meat just because it was packed in plastic containers. Therefore the perspective must be broader and bigger. Looking at an international perspective, measures like the one EU decided on in 2018, to ban the production and selling of single-use

plastic straws, cups and utensils is one step (Andrews). Therefore an alternative to these single-use items need to be manufactured instead and to affordable prices. However, this is not enough and as argued by the executive director of Greenpeace USA, Annie Leonard, “Recycling alone will never stem the flow of plastics into our oceans; we have to get to the source of the problem and slow down the production of all this plastic waste”. In order to do so, Leonard argues that it is the companies that produce items that are solved with or through plastic that need to lead the way in the decreasing of plastics in our oceans. Drink companies produce 500 billion single-use plastic bottles every year and to agree with Leonard, these companies have to make a change, in order for the earth to see a change.

You may ask yourself now, how am I supposed to live without plastics? The answer is you don't just stop using it, since it actually has several benefits. In fact plastic has increased our living standards drastically and helps in decreasing food waste or lower the gas mileage by enabling lighter cars. All of which is a positive contribution when you look towards, for example climate change. However, you don't have to live without plastic, but change your plastic use habit. If you, as an individual use less plastic bags or bottles, and someone else use less and so on it leads to a massive decrease in use of plastic, so companies have to decrease their production. If single-use plastic items gets banned, reusable or recyclable items will be the alternative. To be honest, plastic is beneficial to us humans in many ways, but it is the excessive use that is the problem.

So, in conclusion, there is an excessive use of plastic that is harming the marine life in oceans and therefore also us humans. In order to stop this companies need to take responsibility for their plastic production. More initiatives like EU banning the production and selling of

single-use plastic items need to break ground. Individuals must be more responsible with their use of plastic and advocate for broader recycling options. Together, on these three levels, the excessive use of plastic that is causing damage to our oceans, the marine life and us humans can be stopped. Look around you and try to spot a plastic item. How many more times can you actually use that item? Could you have bought that item but made of another material? All I'm asking is to look around you, and see how YOU can contribute to a healthier life for the oceans as well as your fellow humans on this earth.

Works cited

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