
GREEN DEAL

Framework agreement to reduce
the consumption of lightweight
plastic carrier bags
(Plastic Carrier Bag Agreement)

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PARTIES

The Parties to this agreement are the Ministry of the Environment (*the Ministry*) on behalf of the State of Finland and the Federation of Finnish Commerce (*the Federation*). An individual enterprise commits to this agreement scheme by joining the Society's Commitment by the Joining Document as specified in paragraph 4.

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BACKGROUND AND DEFINITIONS

The programme of measures of the Finnish Marine Strategy 2016–2021 adopted by the Government proposes that, with the aim to reduce the littering of the Baltic Sea, proposals for measures are to be prepared to reduce the amount of plastic litter, in particular. As means to reduce littering the focus of the measures should include the use of plastic containers and bags.

Provisions on measures to reduce the consumption of plastic carrier bags are laid down in the European Parliament and Council Directive 94/62/EC on packaging and packaging waste (as amended by Directive (EU) 2015/720; *Packaging Waste Directive*). According to the Packaging Waste Directive, Member States may incorporate the provisions in Article 4(1a) concerning plastic carrier bags into their national legislation by means of agreements between the competent public authorities and the economic sectors concerned.

In this Agreement

- *plastic* means a polymer within the meaning of Article 3(5) of Regulation (EC) No 1907/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council, to which additives or other substances may have been added, and which is capable of functioning as a main structural component of carrier bags;
- *plastic carrier bags* mean carrier bags, with or without handle, made of plastic, which are supplied to consumers at the point of sale of goods or products;
- *lightweight plastic carrier bags* mean plastic carrier bags with a wall thickness below 50 microns;
- *thin plastic carrier bags* mean plastic carrier bags with a wall thickness below 15 microns which are not required for hygiene purposes or not provided as primary packaging for loose food;
- *very lightweight plastic carrier bags* mean plastic carrier bags with a wall thickness below 15 microns which are required for hygiene purposes or provided as primary packaging for loose food when this helps to prevent food wastage;
- *point of sale* means the place where the consumer pays for the purchased goods at the retail outlet;
- *retail trade* means trade in consumer goods;
- *society's commitment* means the interpretation approved by the National Commission on Sustainable Development of Finland of the long-term vision, principles and objectives of sustainable development. Society's Commitment serves as the target framework for the strategy and programme work of the different stakeholders;
- *commitment to measures* means the commitments of administrative branches and other stakeholders in society such as companies, local governments, associations, education institutions and local operators concerning measures by which they give their own commitment to meet the objectives.

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OBJECTIVES OF THE AGREEMENT

By the agreement joint actions are agreed to undertake measures required by the Packaging Waste Directive to reduce the consumption of lightweight plastic carrier bags. The Parties consider that the measures undertaken or to be undertaken on the grounds of the agreement contribute to meeting the requirements concerning the reduction of the use of plastic carrier bags included in the Directive.

The purpose of the agreement is to agree on voluntary measures of the retail sector to ensure that the minimum objectives concerning the consumption of lightweight plastic carrier bags in the Packaging Waste Directive are reached in Finland. The objective of this agreement is that the measures based on it contribute to fulfilling the objective specified in the above-mentioned provision, which is that the annual consumption level does not exceed 40 lightweight plastic carrier bags per person by 31 December 2025. The consumption levels of very lightweight plastic carrier bags are excluded from the objectives.

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SECTORS COVERED BY THE AGREEMENT

As a rule all companies in the retail sector with one or several branches in Finland may join the plastic bag agreement for the trade sector via the Society's Commitment.

Objectives

A company in the trade sector commits to undertake measures to reach the objective described in paragraph 3 above.

In addition, the company commits to joining Society's Commitment to Sustainable Development and to giving the commitment to measures aimed at reducing the consumption of plastic carrier bags.

How the companies join the agreement

A company joins the agreement when it has given a commitment to measures to reduce the use of plastic carrier bags and this has been approved and the company has notified the Federation of Finnish Commerce of having joined the Society's Commitment.

Objectives of the company

- A company in the trade sector decides on the measures and how these are to be implemented by joining the Society's Commitment. The measures shall include at least the following:
- advice and information to reduce the consumption of lightweight plastic carrier bags and prevent littering;
- there is a price for lightweight plastic carrier bags;
- thin plastic carrier bags are no longer available at retail outlets on a self-service basis.

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OBLIGATIONS OF THE SIGNATORY PARTIES

5.1 Federation

The obligations of the Federation arise from the implementation of the general programme of measures for the trade sector.

To reach the objectives the Federation:

- encourages and advises the companies to join the Plastic Carrier Bag Agreement and participate in the application of the agreement scheme;
- supports advisory and information campaigns to reduce the consumption of plastic carrier bags;
- monitors the realisation of the obligations to reduce the use of plastic carrier bags in the companies joining the programme of measures together with the supervisory authority for producer responsibility;
- where necessary, sets up a steering group to guide and monitor the implementation of the programme of measures;
- has the responsibility for delivering information relating to the monitoring of the objectives of the agreement to the Ministry;
- participates in the development of the Society's Commitment scheme with regard to the implementation of this framework agreement together with the Ministry and the companies joining this agreement.

5.2 Ministry

To reach the objectives and taking account of the funds available for each year the Ministry:

- undertakes to evaluate after three (3) years from the date when the agreement was concluded the effectiveness of the measures referred to in terms of reducing the consumption of light-weight plastic carrier bags and preventing littering. Should the evaluation show that the measures taken have not been effective, the Ministry of the Environment will consider other potential means to reduce the consumption of lightweight plastic carrier bags;
- participates in the development of the Society's Commitment scheme with regard to the implementation of this framework agreement together with the Federation and the companies joining this agreement;
- supports advisory, training and experimentation projects and their implementation together with the other parties to the agreement.

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REPORTING

The Ministry and the Federation will specify, by the end of 2016, the methods to be applied in monitoring the achievement of the objectives and reporting on it. The companies report on the measures taken in the Society's Commitment scheme on an annual basis.

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MANAGEMENT GROUP

The Ministry of the Environment appoints the management group for three (3) years at a time. Both the Ministry and the Federation shall be represented in the management group.

The task of the management group is to follow and promote the realisation of the objectives of the agreement by:

- estimating the level of consumption of lightweight plastic carrier bags per person in the beginning of the contract period;
- monitoring the reported numbers of lightweight carrier bags consumed on an annual basis;
- verifying the correctness of the reported information on the numbers of lightweight carrier bags consumed;
- participating in the development of the measures aimed to meet the objectives of the agreement;
- participating in the provision of advice and information.

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DURATION AND TERMINATION OF THE AGREEMENT

This agreement enters into force when it has been signed and remains in force until 31 December 2025.

If the evaluation under paragraph 5.2 shows that the objectives to 2025 are not likely to be met, the Ministry will prepare proposals for changes concerning the period 2021-2025. In this context it is also agreed how the changes are to be implemented together with the parties to the agreement.

SIGNATURES

Helsinki
31 October 2016

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Minister of Agriculture and the Environment
Ministry of the Environment

Juhani Pekkala
Managing Director
Federation of Finnish Commerce