

Ban on plastic bags from 1 July 2019

Single-use plastic shopping bags have already been phased out from supermarkets and large retailers, and from 1 July 2019, they will be banned for all businesses.

Here's what you need to know to make the transition.



What's changing

The ban covers any plastic shopping bags that meet all of the following criteria:

- made of any type of plastic less than 70 microns in thickness.
- Includes plastics made from bio-based materials such as starch and plastics designed to be degradable, biodegradable or oxo-degradable
- have carry handles including die cut handles, and
- are new or unused.

Bio-based plastic bags are included in the ban because even though they are made from plants, their manufacturing process prevents them from breaking down as quickly or easily as their original source.

The Ministry for the Environment has photographed examples on their site of bags that are banned and bags that are acceptable going forward.

[Which plastic shopping bags are being phased out?](#)

Who is affected

All retailers selling goods in New Zealand must make the transition by 1 July 2019. This includes businesses such as:

- retail shops (eg dairies, petrol stations, clothing shops, hardware shops, garden centres)
- restaurants (eg cafes, takeaway shops, food trucks)
- online businesses
- not-for-profit organisations
- farmers markets.



91% of New Zealanders say they always or often bring their own reusable bags rather than use plastic.

What to do now

While most plastic bags will be phased out, some bags will still be allowed. These include:

- bags made from bio-based materials that are not plastic (eg cotton, jute, hemp, paper or flax)
- long-life, multi-use shopping bags made from synthetic fabrics (eg nylon or polyester)
- bags without handles including lightweight 'barrier bags' (eg bags used for holding meat or produce)
- bin liners
- bags for pet waste
- bags that form part of a product's packaging (eg sealed pouches with handles)

Start to transition your business away from plastic by encouraging your customers to bring their own shopping bags. You might also offer or sell your own reusable bags for customer use.

Paper bags are allowed, but they are still considered a single-use option and require a lot of resources to produce (wood, chemicals, energy and water). If you choose to use paper products, unbleached paper and paper that includes recycled content is preferable.

You may also need to cancel any existing inventory orders for plastic shopping bags covered by the phase out. The Ministry for the Environment has resources available to help you communicate the change to your customers. These include frequently asked questions, posters and social media that are free to use.

[Plastic bag phase out](#)

[Answering customers questions](#)

[Posters for businesses](#)