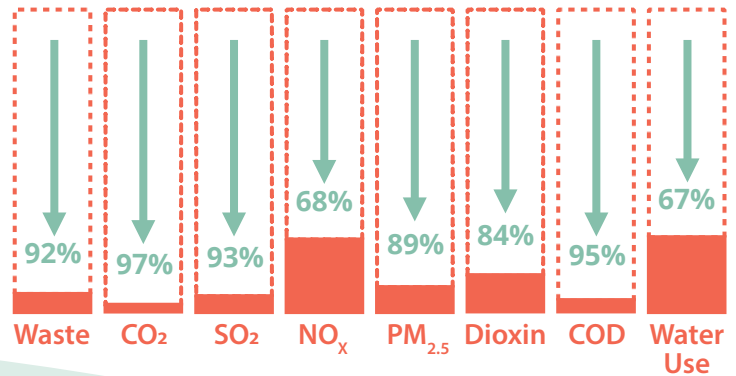




REUSABLE PACKAGING CAN PROTECT PUBLIC HEALTH & THE ENVIRONMENT

Materials used for reusable and refillable packaging, such as glass, stainless steel, and ceramics made with non-toxic glazes are often safer.¹ These materials are less likely to result in the migration of hazardous chemicals from packaging into food and beverages.

Reusable food packaging systems are developing across the globe and shifting the throw-away economy toward circular zero waste systems. Reusable and refillable delivery systems can play a critical role in curbing plastic pollution, reducing health risks associated with exposure to toxics, and avoiding greenhouse gas emissions from single-use packaging. A recent study of the impacts of switching to reusable tableware in China would cause significant reductions of waste (92%), carbon dioxide/CO₂ (97%), sulfur dioxide/SO₂ (93%), nitrogen dioxide/NO_x (68%), fine particulates / PM_{2.5} (89%), dioxin (84%), Chemical Oxygen Demand (95%), and water use (67%).² Reusable food delivery systems help businesses save money, increase customer satisfaction, create jobs and develop a more vital local economy.³ They also help governments reduce costs associated with waste and litter and achieve climate goals.



Policies supporting reusable and toxic-free food packaging & tableware

Legislation can accelerate a transition to reusable foodware for on-site food service and in take-out and delivery services. At the same time, policies should ensure that both disposable and reusable foodware are free of health-threatening chemicals.

Policy Recommendations. Legislators must enact robust regulatory measures to ensure the transition towards toxic-free and reusable packaging, notably:

- 1 Set information and reporting obligations along the value chain to ensure transparency and traceability of chemicals in all food contact materials (single-use and reusable).
- 2 Phase out hazardous chemicals from all food contact materials.
- 3 Set legally binding consumption reduction requirements for single-use cups, beverage bottles, food containers, and accessories such as straws and utensils.
- 4 Require reusable foodware for onsite eating in all food and beverage outlets.

- 5 Require consumers pay visible fees for single-use cups and containers in take-out and delivery of food and beverages, and ensure retailers provide reusable alternatives at lower cost, and allow customers to use a reusable container to avoid the fee.
- 6 Set legally binding requirements on the share of refillable beverage packaging placed on the market and put in place deposit return scheme (DRS) to ensure their return.
- 7 Provide financial support for reusable items and systems to overcome barriers to entry, such as capital investments in the logistical infrastructure for collection and washing.
- 8 Incentivize the transition to non-toxic, reusable packaging and foodware.



Recent examples of legislation supporting reusable and toxic-free packaging



Single-use grocery bags.

Plastic bag bans or charges for single-use bags that encourage consumers to bring a reusable bag. Such policies have been enacted in at least 127 countries globally.⁴



Mandatory reusable foodware for on-site dining. The Berkeley ordinance was also the first to prohibit single-use foodware for on-site dining.

Since then, other cities across the globe and countries, including Chile, Taiwan, and France, have enacted similar policies.⁵



Mandatory reusable cups and containers at events and workplace. The region of Flanders (Belgium) prohibited the use of single-use cups, cans and plastic bottles at all events,

and this prohibition will be extended to single-use cutlery and plates from 2022.⁶ The City of San Francisco requires that 10% of beverages at city-sponsored events be served in reusable cups.⁷

Charges for single-use “to-go” cups and containers.

The City of Berkeley, California (U.S.) adopted the Single-Use Foodware and Litter Reduction Ordinance in Jan. 2019, the first policy enacting a charge on to-go cups.⁸ Following Berkeley, several California cities and the City of Vancouver, B.C. adopted cup charges in 2020, one enacted a 25 cent food container charge.⁹



Bans of certain chemicals.

Denmark prohibits the use of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in paper and cardboard used in food contact materials.¹⁰ Several U.S. states have banned the use of PFAS, bisphenol-A, certain heavy metals and/or phthalates in packaging and foodware.¹¹



It is essential that plastic manufacturers and big consumer brands join efforts toward reuse solutions by phasing out single-use packaging items, and fostering alternative delivery systems.

Reusable solutions around the world

New businesses are launching across the globe that provide food and beverages in returnable, reusable formats. Reusable systems are becoming available to provide consumers with take-out food and beverages, to groceries, house cleaning products, and personal care items. The map below showcases leading examples of reusable solutions in different regions.



Bulk Food Stores - Sr. A Granel (Brazil) Bulk food stores have an in-store dispensing system for foods and household items, which allows customers

to bring their own containers or purchase reusable containers. Items are sold by weight, after taring the container. Sr. A Granel has opened 12 stores in Brazil since 2016. Along with more than 750 bulk food options available for in-store purchase or same-day delivery, the company offers education on health, well-being, and diverse food cultures.



Cafe Cup Lending Programs - Vesselworks (US) Available in Boulder, Colorado, Berkeley, California and expanding to other

parts of the San Francisco Bay area, Vesselworks lets customers borrow a cup and return it free of charge. Their tech-enabled stainless steel reusable cup service is like a library lending program. Customers sign up and check out vessels at participating cafes and drop them off at participating cafes or curbside kiosks. The service is free to the customer; the cafe covers the cost.



© Tiffin

Deposit Return Systems - "Tiffin" meal delivery (India, UK and Belgium) Dabbawala in Mumbai, India is the pioneer in using reusable stainless-

steel Tiffin tins for meal delivery, which delivers 200,000 meals a day without disposable packaging. Dabdrop in London provides a similar service for customers who pay a monthly subscription fee and an initial €17 deposit. In Belgium, Tiffin Belgium is reducing 1.5 tonnes of food packaging waste per year per 1,000 members, saving €20,000 in the purchase of disposable containers.



© Dispatch Goods

Online refillable/ reusable delivery - Dispatch Goods (US) Online refillable/ reusable delivery models offer easy sustainable solutions

to take-out dining plastic pollution. Customers of Dispatch Goods can order directly from a participating restaurant and pick their meal up in a reusable container. The company picks up the reusable containers directly from the customer. Dispatch Goods says they chose stainless steel containers because stainless steel is durable, light-weight, recyclable, and has a lower chance of toxic chemicals migrating into food compared to plastic containers. Customers pay \$1.50 per container.



© Loopstore

Online groceries and consumer products - Loopstore (Global) Loop delivers groceries and consumer products directly to the consumer in reusable packaging

that is cleaned and refilled to be reused, again and again. They partner with major brands and retailers. Loop is currently available in the United Kingdom, France, and the United States. In 2021, Loop will continue expanding internationally with launches in Canada, Japan, Australia and Germany.



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Zero Waste Event Planning - Hasiru Dala Innovations Private Limited (India) HDIPL assists corporations, groups, and individuals in

minimizing waste generation when hosting events. It provides consultancy in all aspects of events, from pre- planning assessment, venue preparation, ground- level implementation, and post-event housekeeping. Clients include organizers or sport matches, conferences, weddings, concerts, religious events, and parties.

Endnotes

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- 7 <https://sfbos.org/sites/default/files/o0294-18.pdf>
- 8 Moore, A. (2019, February 24). Berkeley on the Path to Zero Waste Dining! [Blog post]. Retrieved from: <https://www.breakfreefromplastic.org/2019/02/24/berkeley-on-the-path-to-zero-waste-dining/>; see also www.upstreamolutions.org/reuse-acceleration-policies
- 9 Rethink Plastic Alliance; see also the [Upstream reuse policy tracker](#)
- 10 Rethink Plastic Alliance
- 11 <https://www.saferstates.com/toxic-chemicals/food-packaging/>