

Dear South Africa is a network of online platforms designed to facilitate government and encourage the public to participate in unbiased decision-making processes or policy formation at SOE, municipal, provincial and national levels.



Plastic Bag Regulations

7 August to 7 September 2020

**enviro
expert** | environmental
expert coalition

Barbara Dallas Creecy, Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment invited institutions, organizations, and individuals to submit written comments on the proposed amendments as set out in the gazette under section 44(1)(a) and (aA) of the National Environmental Management Act, 1998 (Act No. 107 of 1998), the Environment Conservation Act Plastic Carrier Bags and Plastic Flat Bags Regulations of 2003, published under Government Notice No. R. 625 in Government Gazette No. 24839 of 9 May 2003 in terms of section 24(d) of the Environment Conservation Act, 1989 (Act No. 73 of 1989).

The above notices for an amendment to the National Environmental Management Act, 1998 (Act No 107 of 1998), the Environment Conservation Act Plastic Carrier Bags and Plastic Flat Bags Regulations of 2003 was released on 07 August 2020 where the closing date was set to 07 September 2020.

Submissions and enquiries were directed to;

Ms Pamela Nxumalo at pnxumalo@environment.gov.za.

Inquiries regarding the draft Notice could be directed to Ms Pamela Nxumalo at (012) 399 9819/060 971 0747 or Mr Dumisani Buthelezi at (012) 399 8535 / 071 891 8031.

Dear SA's Enviro Expert Coalition hosted a participation project through Dear South Africa's mobile and online platform to facilitate, educate and encourage public participation and comment to shape this amendment.

<https://dearsouthafrica.co.za/eia-exemption/>

Included on the web page was:

- 1 - the published Amendments and related documents as downloadable PDFs
- 2 - a research paper on plastic waste inputs from land to ocean was also included and the UN document on single use plastics.
- 3 - a live view of public comments (with a counter and breakdown reflecting number of participants)
- 4 - video summaries
- 5 - links to relevant media articles
- 6 - a portal which posed three questions (with the option of three responses)
- 7 - a comment facility to provide input on the Amendment



Each public entry was individually delivered to pnxumalo@environment.gov.za. DearSA also captured all public entries which have been used to produce this report.

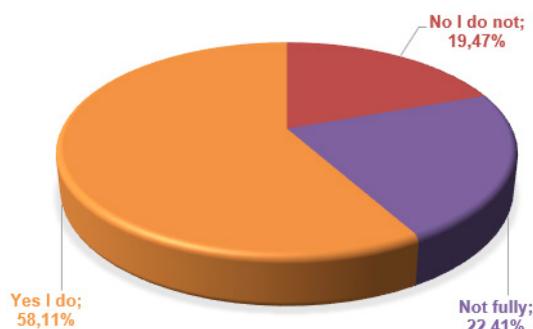
Note: In order to accurately reflect public comment, DearSA's projects are unbiased and hold no partisan opinion or agenda. Raw captured data is attached as an Excel file.

A total of **7415** comments were received by the set closing date of 07 September 2020 (included in the Excel file). This report reflects the entries received by the closing date.

Question presented;

Do you support the proposed amendment to the Plastic Bags Regulations (view summary below)?

	Yes, I do	[4,309 selected]	58.11%
	No, I do not	[1,444 selected]	19.47%
	Not fully	[1,662 selected]	22.41%



Comments

The participants are encouraged to provide comment to justify their selection in order to help shape the policy amendment.

Of the “Yes, I do” comments, the common theme circulates around a “greener” environment. The public in this category fully support the reduction of plastic use due to the detrimental effects that plastic can have on the environment. Many participants have already started utilising alternate products to replace the use of plastic such as hemp or other biodegradable and recyclable products. Some of the public even suggest terminating the use of plastic fully by 2021.

Some of the “Yes, I do” comments carried conditions, including:

- 1 – Polystyrene products should also have these amendments applied to their respective product category.
- 2 – Our municipal waste services should also be upgraded across the country to facilitate the separation of recyclable and plastic items for correct and thorough disposal.
- 3 – Job opportunities should be created through implementing a program that can support and sustain the movement toward utilising recyclable products above plastic products.
- 4 – Educate the public on the negative effects of utilising plastic products, including main food retailers.
- 5 – The funds that are generated by the increased cost of plastic bags should be privately administered as a controlled fund to benefit future environmental initiatives.



Of the “Not Fully” comments, the public expressed their views that they feel a total ban on single use plastics should be implemented sooner than the proposed dates in the draft Notice. They promote limiting the use of plastic carrier bags but also make mention that the legislation should be more “aggressive” in tackling this environmental issue that is faced globally. Biodegradable products are available in our country and should be further enhanced and developed.

Majority of the Not Fully comments carried conditions, including:

- 1 - Shorten the proposed time frame to implement these amendments.
- 2 - Setup waste collection facilities across all our provinces with the same set of regulations that are accessible by all members of the public in order so that this movement can be support.

Another finding from these views is that the public have a few questions relating to the proposed amendments in line with the following:

- 1 - How will this implementation of the new amendments be controlled?
- 2 - Who will be maintaining and enforcing that these new regulations are applied?
- 3 - Why are the implementation dates set to so many years from now if we know how long the environmental rehabilitation process can take?

Of the “No I do not” comments the participants felt that the use of plastic carrier bags should be banned outright. Plastic can be replaced with brown paper bags which is still economically viable for the lower income households therefore, there isn't any further requirement to continue utilising plastic carrier bags. Paying a higher fee for plastic bags was not well supported in this category as the public feel that this will not resolve the issue and plastic will still be utilised and wasted. It was also identified that by receiving additional income from a product that should rather be banned, may create a secondary problem within itself. The money payable by the consumer can rather be used for an alternate product.

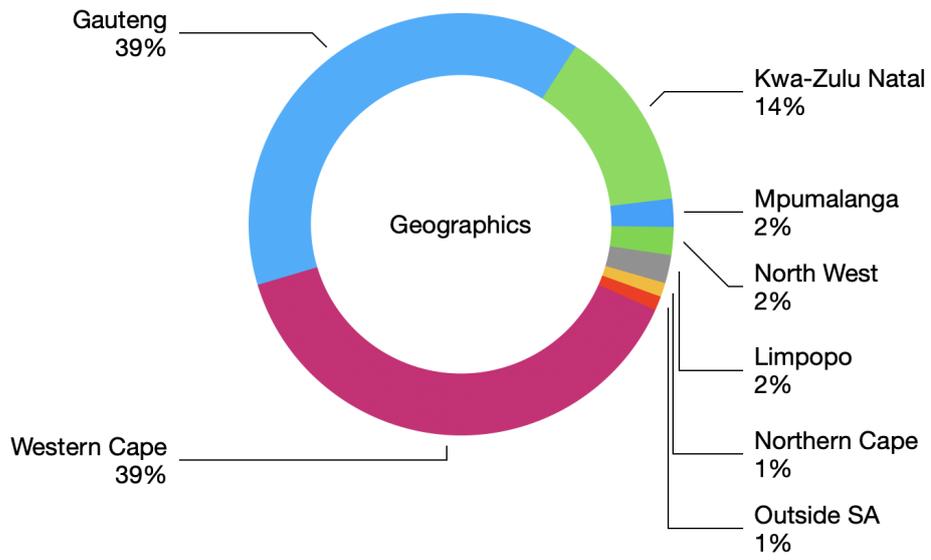
The public in this category also raised the question relating to the proposed amendments regarding the reasons that the end date of plastic use was set to 2027?

Suggestions from the “No I do not” comments, include:

1. Implement a total ban on the plastic carriers and utilise alternate products that are currently available and biodegradable.

Demographics

Comments originated from all provinces with the greatest input arising from Western Cape, followed by Gauteng and KZN. Demographics can be further broken down into comment options (yes, no, not fully) per region upon request.



Thank you

Chloe Roberts - Environmental Expert Coalition

Rob Hutchinson - Dear South Africa