

FOODWARE FACT SHEET

Contra Costa County Climate Leaders

A project of Generation Green - a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization

Find Links to Other Local Government Policy Opportunities at

www.cccclimateleaders.org

WHAT?

Declining to use disposable plastic foodware, including straws, or switching to compostable alternatives, will significantly reduce plastic litter and the greenhouse gas emissions involved in both the use and the production of single use plastics. It will also decrease the adverse effects on the environment, and wildlife who become entangled in or ingest plastics. And protect human health; given humans are consuming microplastics in our food and water. Reducing the use of disposable plastics will lessen the clogging of infrastructure and lower the economic and environmental costs that are associated with managing waste.

WHY?

- **Unsustainable:** [Studies](#) show the use of plastic has increased twentyfold in the past half-century and is expected to double again in the next 20 years. The cost associated with handling the waste, and the greenhouse gas emissions from its production, is conservatively estimated at \$40 billion annually – exceeding the plastic packaging industry's profit pool.
- **Ocean pollution:** [Scientists predict](#) that by 2050, there will be more plastic in the ocean than fish.
- **Landfill Trash:** According to a 2011 study by [Clean Water Action](#), food and beverage plastics accounted for 67% of litter found in a city litter audit.
- **Lost Revenue:** Economic studies estimate that single-use means that 95% of the value of plastic items, or about \$80 billion to \$120 billion worldwide, is lost or thrown away in revenue each year.
- **Toxic to Produce:** About 4% of the world's oil and gas production is used as raw materials in plastics, and another 3-4% is used for energy to produce plastics. Communities near waste incinerators are exposed to toxins such as dioxins and mercury which can lead to severe known health risks, including asthma and cancers.
- **Not being recycled:** According to [CalRecycle](#), the majority of recyclable materials in California was exported to China. Currently, China law requires less than .3% contamination in materials that are to be recycled. Products unable to meet that are not being recycled.

WHO?

Local City Governments are taking the lead. Working with environmental groups such as Clean Water Action, Californians Against Waste, Northern California Recycling Association, Safe SF Bay, Clean Bay Project, and Surfrider; local policies and legislation are regulating single use plastic straws and foodware.

HOW?

It is easy to reject the use of straws, or if needed, consider reusable alternatives made of metal, silicone, glass, and bamboo. When reusables are not an option, disposable alternatives include straws and foodware made from starch, wheat, bamboo, seaweed, wood pulp, hay or recycled products rather than plastic. A local city ordinance typically involves charging take-out fees for disposable items, such as plastics foodware. Policies also include providing straws and foodware upon request only, and giving credit to customers who bring in their own reusable items. Exemptions can be provided for a business that can prove that this causes undue hardship.

- Steps and resources to help pass a local ordinance on single-use foodware <https://www.cleanwateraction.org/plastics-toolkit>
- How to pass a disposable free dining ordinance <http://rethinkdisposable.org/how-pass-disposable-free-dining-ordinance-your-city>
- Sample policies to prevent plastic pollution <https://www.productstewardship.us/page/PlasticPolicies>



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WHERE?

The state of California has taken a leadership role when it comes to straws:

- ✓ [California Bill AB1884](#) went into effect January 2019, and states that sit down restaurants are only allowed to provide single-use straws upon request only. The law doesn't specify what type of straw can be provided when requested. It also doesn't include many other types of establishments that frequently use to-go ware and doesn't address other types of disposable foodware that are equally detrimental.

There are a number of examples of cities who have passed local policies that go beyond the law and include straws, foodware and other single use items such as cocktail stirrers and more:

- ✓ [Alameda](#) states that the Straws-on-request must be replaced with compostable fiber (paper/bamboo) straws, to go reusable, and when a reusable option is not available, must provide compostable, fiber-based packaging for to-go items.
- ✓ [Berkeley](#) requires that only reusable foodware be used for dine-in services. All disposable foodware must be certified compostable, free of intentionally added fluorinated chemicals, and provided upon request only. Also requires food vendors that have self-bussing to provide color coded receptacles for customers to separate their recyclables, compostables and landfill waste. And mandates a \$.25 fee for every single-use beverage cups provided.
- ✓ [Carmel-by-the-Sea](#) requires all disposable food service ware including straws, stir sticks, cups, lids and to-go utensils must be certified compostable. No number 6 polystyrene products are allowed, including hot cup lids. And it applies not only to restaurants but also grocery stores, delis, farmers markets, food trucks, special events, and any other business or event where prepared food is sold for carryout or packaged for convenience.
- ✓ [Malibu](#) bans the distribution of single-use plastic straws, stirrers, and cutlery items in all retail stores and restaurants. Non-plastic alternatives may be provide upon request.
- ✓ [Oakland](#) requires that food service ware be biodegradable and compostable, and that beverage straws be provided upon request only. This extends to all Oakland food vendors selling prepared food—including restaurants, delis, fast-food establishments, vendors at fairs and food trucks. Plus All City facilities must also follow the ordinance.
- ✓ [Richmond](#), retail and lodging establishments cannot use, sell or distribute plastic foodware. They must use utensils and lids that are recyclable or compostable; cannot use polystyrene. Reusable foodware is encouraged and establishments may charge a take-out fee to customers to cover the cost.
- ✓ [San Francisco](#) Starting July 1, 2019, sets limits on single-use plastic foodware accessories such as plastic beverage plugs, cocktail sticks, stirrers, toothpicks. And clarifies that foodware sold in San Francisco must be certified by the Biodegradable Products Institute (BPI). Includes grocery stores and other retailers.
- ✓ [Santa Cruz](#) Requires food providers to only give straws, lids, and cutlery and to-go condiment packages upon request of the customer. And bans plastic cutlery; stir sticks and Polystyrene #6 products including hot beverage lids. Food service providers are encouraged to charge a take-out fee of \$.25 and provide a \$.25 credit for customers bringing their own reusable containers for to-go items
- ✓ [Santa Cruz County](#) (unincorporated areas) requires that all to-go packages, utensils, straws, stir sticks, cups and lids must be certified as fully compostable.
- ✓ [Santa Monica](#) requires that food establishments distribute food and beverages with marine degradable food service ware. They also include plates, trays, bowls, containers, cups and cup lids.

