



Advisory Group on a 'Waste Action Plan for a Circular Economy'

Meeting 27 February 2020

Discussion Note – Plastic and Packaging Waste

The topic for discussion at the next meeting on 27 February will be plastic and plastic packaging waste. We have posed a number of questions below on the topic for you to consider in advance of the meeting. However please feel free to raise any other issues or measures on the topic you feel are appropriate on the day.

Background

New EU waste targets will be challenging for Ireland, particularly in relation to plastic packaging. We must increase the amount of recycled plastic packaging from 34% (2017) to 55% by 2030. However, these targets must be viewed as minimum requirements for Ireland and our national ambition should be to go above and beyond these. Current EU packaging statistics show that Ireland generates more plastic packaging per capita than the majority of other Member States (MS). While the methodology behind how these statistics were arrived at is currently being discussed with the EU the extent of the challenge facing us cannot be underestimated.

The effects of plastic on our marine environment have been well highlighted recently. In June 2019, the EU Commission published Directive 2019/904, referred to as the Single Use Plastics or SUP Directive, which seeks to reduce the impact of certain plastic products on the environment. The Directive introduces a range of measures to deal with single use plastic items including those that are now known to cause 70% of marine and beach litter. A summary of these measures, including timescales, is attached as an appendix to this

document. The Directive includes an obligation on all MS to achieve an ambitious and sustained reduction in the consumption of SUP products such as beverage and food containers.

All MS have to prepare a description of the measures to be adopted to achieve significant consumption reduction. These measures must be notified to the Commission and made publicly available by 3 July 2021. These measures may include the introduction of national consumption reduction targets, economic instruments to ensure that single-use plastic products are not provided free of charge and that reusable alternatives are available at the point of sale.

The next meeting will focus on how Ireland can:

1. Increase our plastic packaging recycling rates and
2. Reduce our consumption of SUP products.

Some questions to consider

- How can we make it easier for citizens to play a role in devising and delivering on our targets?
- What financial (incentive or penalty), voluntary or legislative measures should be considered to reduce our consumption of SUP food containers and cups?
- What actions are already in place that could be expanded on to reduce our use of plastic cups and food containers?
- Is the introduction of eco modulated Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) fees sufficient to eliminate excessive or difficult to recycle plastic packaging? If not, what other measures are necessary?
- The retail sector has a large role to play in this including coffee shops, fast food outlets, service stations and supermarkets. Are there others to which we should be reaching?
- The public sector also has a large role to play and the purchase of single-use plastic cups, cutlery and straws across has been banned across all government departments and bodies. What other initiatives can the public sector undertake to deliver significant reductions?