

10 Urgent Demands from Swiss NGOs to the Federal Council on Plastic Pollution

Swiss NGOs call for decisive action ahead of the new packaging ordinance

As the Federal Council prepares a **new packaging ordinance**, NGOs working on plastic pollution in Switzerland call for **decisive action** based on independent **science** to ensure an ambitious and effective policy response. Plastic pollution is not just an environmental issue—it is also a **public health challenge**. The transition to a **circular economy** must be designed to protect both people and the planet. It is also critical to approach this exercise understanding that the plastic crisis goes beyond the question of packaging and that the Federal Council should develop proposals to address plastic production, use and disposal in all sectors.

We outline **10 key actions** that the government must take to **prevent plastic pollution at its source, invest in the infrastructure needed to scale up reuse systems and ensure safe materials & end of life solutions, while simultaneously improving transparency.**

PREVENT PLASTIC POLLUTION AT THE SOURCE

1. Ban Unnecessary Single-Use Plastics

Summary: Switzerland must align with international best practices by phasing out non-essential and problematic single-use items, such as cutlery, straws, and excessive packaging at the very minimum.

Recognizing that the EU has already banned several single-use plastic items without succeeding in reversing the trends in plastic production and pollution, Switzerland must be willing to learn from this experience and go beyond the mere ban of products and develop incentives for reusable alternatives.

2. Introduce Binding Plastic Reduction Targets

Summary: Switzerland must go beyond the low hanging fruit of banning problematic single-use plastics, which has proven insufficient to reduce plastic pollution. Switzerland must develop measures targeting all sectors of the economy and support the setting of legally binding plastic reduction targets to cut production, moving beyond voluntary industry commitments.

Without strong legal obligations, plastic production continues to rise, overwhelming waste management systems. Reduction must be prioritized over recycling.

3. Phase Out Non-Recyclable & Toxic Packaging, including Regrettable Substitutions

Summary: Switzerland must ban packaging that cannot be effectively and safely recycled and ensure alternative materials are truly sustainable and free from harmful substances.

Some materials marketed as alternatives still contain plastic coatings or harmful chemicals. Clear regulatory standards must prevent regrettable substitutions that fail to improve product environmental performance over its life cycle, leading to increased environmental and health impacts.

INVEST IN SAFE AND CONVENIENT REUSE & CIRCULAR ECONOMY INFRASTRUCTURE

4. Use Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) to Fund Reuse Infrastructure

Summary: EPR schemes should be implemented and/or adapted and fund the development of reuse infrastructure, not just recycling and waste disposal.

Switzerland must ensure that producers contribute to waste prevention, including reuse and refill stations, rather than just covering disposal or recycling costs.

5. Enable Large-Scale Reuse Systems

Summary: Switzerland must scale up reusable packaging systems through targeted financial and logistical support.

Studies show that reuse can reduce plastic waste by up to 80%, and create important economic opportunities and jobs. Yet adoption is slow due to high upfront investment costs and virgin plastic subsidies skewing the market. Public funding and investment for reuse economy infrastructure is needed to create the enabling conditions for a profitable innovative environment.

6. Establish National Standards for Reuse and Refill Systems

Summary: Switzerland must standardize reuse systems to ensure cross-sector compatibility and efficiency.

Without harmonized formats and logistics, businesses struggle to adopt returnable packaging systems at scale.

ENSURE SAFE MATERIALS & END-OF-LIFE SOLUTIONS & STRENGTHEN TRANSPARENCY & ACCOUNTABILITY

7. Ensure Full Transparency on Plastic Materials

Summary: Companies must disclose plastic content, chemical ingredients, and recyclability to enable informed policymaking and consumer choice, as most plastics contain EDCs (endocrine-disrupting chemicals) that can migrate into food and consumer products contents.

Transparency will allow for better regulation and safer material choices while preventing the use of hazardous substances.

8. Ensure Chemicals in Plastics and Recycling Do Not Create New Health Risks

Summary: Plastics can contain 16,000 different chemicals, and only 6% are regulated. Switzerland must ban hazardous substances in plastic to prevent adverse environmental and adverse human health impacts.

Current recycling processes retain problematic substances that can migrate into food and consumer products contents. Regulation of Non-Intentionally Added Substances (NIAS) and bans on hazardous substances are needed.

9. Stop Misleading Recyclability & Sustainability Claims (Greenwashing)

Summary: Switzerland must end misleading recyclability claims and require clear, accurate labelling for recycling, compostability, and biodegradability.

Many products claim to be recyclable when they are not, misleading consumers and hindering waste management efforts. Strict truth-in-labelling policies are essential.

STRENGTHEN TRANSPARENCY & ACCOUNTABILITY

10. Mandate Full Transparency in Plastic Production, Imports, Exports, Use, Reuse, Recycling, Composting, Incineration etc. and their impacts

Summary: Switzerland must enforce strict transparency rules on plastic production, recyclability, and disposal impacts.

Corporations must disclose their use of all plastics, associated substances and mismanaged plastic waste, and be held accountable for recyclability claims. This will help prevent misleading information and ensure effective policymaking.

Signees (in alphabetical order)

1. Association pour la sauvegarde du Léman
2. Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL)
3. Earth Action for Impact
4. Fondation Gallifrey
5. Greenpeace Schweiz
6. KYMA sea & conservation research
7. OceanCare
8. Plastic Footprint Network
9. Trash Hero World
10. ZeroWaste Switzerland