

## **A look at Tamil Nadu's plastic ban: 2 years on**

*Do we take plastic pollution and its effects on the ecosystem and our health seriously?*

For release on March 15, World Consumer Rights Day

Chennai, March 2021

This World Consumer Rights Day (WCRD), consumer organisations from around the world, come together to tackle plastic pollution, both for the sake of our environment and our health.

Plastics have become ubiquitous in our lives. Right from its stages of manufacture to its disposal, the use of plastic is fraught with problems. These are problems that can be solved only through a combination of user responsibility, together with systemic marketplace changes which are required at all levels from governments, businesses and standard setters.

On 1st January 2019, the Tamil Nadu government notified a ban on the manufacture, store, supply, transport, sale or distribution of 'use and throwaway plastics' of any thickness. With two years having gone by, Citizen consumer and civic Action Group (CAG) looked at the effectiveness of Tamil Nadu's ban on single-use plastics. CAG surveyed 3 broad business areas for the use of plastic, namely the food and beverage industry, the retail market and wholesalers. As an instance of the pervasiveness of plastic, of the 1936 wholesale shops surveyed by CAG, 100% of shops were found to use some form of banned 'use and throw' plastic, which typically included plastic sacks, bags and wrappers and plastic ribbons. 100% of shops surveyed also used plastic carry-bags routinely.

It appears that even two years after the ban, the state struggles to contain plastic pollution, leaving consumers with very little power to make sustainable consumption choices.

Consumers International, the global membership organisation for consumer groups, who coordinate the WCRD, quote a study which found that 55% of consumers globally have now become more concerned about the environment as a result of COVID-19. The organisation states that "Now is a critical time in highlighting, addressing, and tackling plastic pollution as the global COVID-19 pandemic adds to the rise of single-use plastics including face masks, gloves, and food packaging."

Another study by CAG, looked at information about the recyclability of plastic and how well it was conveyed to the consumer through labels on the product. It was found that, overwhelmingly, these labels were misleading and confusing. For example, chocolate wrappers and chips packets typically carry the recycle symbol. This is likely to lead the consumer to



believe that these materials are recyclable. While technically they are, they are not recyclable within India because of lack of facilities.

While as consumers we need to change how we shop, businesses need to facilitate this transition by replacing plastic with sustainable options where possible, avoiding single use plastics altogether, and be transparent about the type of plastic used and its recyclability. Governments should effectively implement various plastic related laws, including the ban on single-use plastics.

**About Citizen consumer and civic Action Group (CAG):**

CAG is a 35-year-old non-profit and non-political organisation that works towards protecting citizens' rights in consumer, civic and environmental issues and promoting good governance processes including transparency, accountability and participatory decision-making.

For further information, please write to: Vamsi Kapilavai on [vamsishankar.kapilavai@cag.org.in](mailto:vamsishankar.kapilavai@cag.org.in) or 8925480690