



MEDIA FACTSHEET

**TO BE REPORTED ONLY IF CONTENT IS DELIVERED AT COS 2023 DEBATE
AND TO BE EMBARGOED UNTIL AFTER DELIVERY**

DISPOSABLE CARRIER BAG CHARGE

From Monday, 3 July 2023, larger supermarket operators will be required to charge a minimum of five cents for each disposable carrier bag¹ provided to customers for purchases at their physical stores.

2 The charge, which will serve as a nudge to shift consumer behaviour towards a more sustainable habit of using reusable bags, has been kept low to minimise the cost impact on shoppers, while encouraging them to be mindful to take only the number of disposable carrier bags they really need.

3 This requirement will apply to supermarket operators with an annual turnover of more than S\$100 million. This covers around 400, or about two thirds, of all supermarket outlets in Singapore, including NTUC FairPrice, Cold Storage, Giant, Sheng Siong, and Prime supermarket outlets². Supermarket operators with an annual turnover of less than \$100 million are encouraged to voluntarily implement their own bag charges. Many such retailers have already done so.

4 The charge will apply to disposable carrier bags of all material types. Whether they are made of paper, plastic or biodegradable materials, disposables have an impact on our environment during their production, transportation, and disposal. Consequently, shoppers are encouraged to reduce their use of all types of disposable carrier bags, regardless of material type.

5 To uphold accountability and transparency in the use of the proceeds, the supermarket operators will be required to publish information on the number of bags issued, proceeds from the bag charge, and how the proceeds are used. NEA strongly encourages supermarket operators to channel the proceeds to social or environmental causes, so that they will be used meaningfully to uplift vulnerable groups and safeguard our environment. NEA has been engaging the relevant supermarket operators on devoting part of the proceeds to support the shift towards using fewer disposable carrier bags, and encouraging shoppers to bring their own bags, or on programmes that will benefit the local community.

6 As the charge would not remove the public's access to disposable bags, the responsible practice of bagging waste before disposal should continue.

¹ Disposable carrier bags are bags with handles, such as t-shirt bags or die-cut/punched handle bags; disposable non-carrier bags such as flat top plastic bags for bagging fresh produce or meat/seafood – would not be subject to the mandatory charge.

² Based on 2021 annual revenue and data on SFA licensees.

Consultations on the Bag Charge

7 The bag charge framework was developed after more than a year of extensive engagement and consultations with the industry and the public. A Citizens' Workgroup (CWG) on Reducing Excessive Consumption of Disposables was convened in September 2020, comprising 55 individuals from diverse backgrounds, ages, and professions. One of the recommendations by the CWG was a disposable carrier bag charge. After careful deliberation of the CWG's recommendations, MSE and NEA commenced consultations to develop an appropriate charging model for disposable carrier bags at supermarkets in Singapore.

8 NEA consulted close to 6,000 stakeholders from the industry and the public, including those from low-income groups and members from the social services sector. This included public surveys, engagement, and focus group sessions, as well as a REACH consultation that sought further feedback on the proposed details of the disposable carrier bag charge. Refer to the **Annex** for an infographic about commonly asked questions regarding the bag charge.

9 Based on NEA's survey³ of around 1,000 Singapore residents in September 2021, close to 90 per cent agreed that they had a part to play in reducing the usage of disposable bags. More than 80 per cent agreed that the excessive use of disposable bags had a negative impact on the environment. In addition, more than 70 per cent agreed that a mandatory charge would reduce the usage of such bags.

10 With the disposable carrier bag charge, we hope it will encourage a shift towards more sustainable habits and lifestyles, as we collectively work towards our journey towards a Zero Waste Singapore.

– End –

For media queries, please contact:

Regina Goh (Ms)

Corporate Communications
National Environment Agency
Tel: 9799 3154
Email: regina_goh@nea.gov.sg

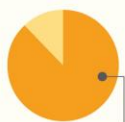
Siti Annazia (Ms)

Corporate Communications
National Environment Agency
DID: 9844 6309
Email: siti_annazia_hamsani@nea.gov.sg

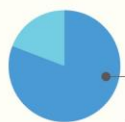
³ A randomised sampling was used to select respondents for the survey.

Disposable Carrier Bag Charge At Supermarkets

Based on NEA's survey of around 1,000 Singapore residents in September 2021:



Close to **90%** agreed they had a part to play in reducing the usage of disposable bags



More than **80%** agreed that the excessive use of disposable bags affects the environment



More than **70%** felt that a mandatory charge would reduce usage of disposable bags

Frequently Asked Questions About the Disposable Carrier Bag Charge



Why can't supermarkets use biodegradable or paper bags instead?

- Disposables have an impact on the environment when made and disposed of, regardless of material type. This includes paper and biodegradable bags.
- Switching to such bags would not change user behaviour and reduce usage.
- In Singapore, disposable bags are either recycled or incinerated, not landfilled directly. The potential environmental benefits of biodegradable materials cannot be realised here.



Has NEA considered how the charge may impact low-income families?

- The minimum charge has been kept low to moderate the cost impact, while encouraging shoppers to be mindful of how many disposable carrier bags they take.
- NEA will engage supermarket operators to use the proceeds for good causes including those that support low-income families, and to adopt initiatives to lessen the potential impact of the charge, such as encouraging shoppers to bring their own bags.



How will I bag my waste for disposal?

- Disposable bags, including those for bagging fresh produce such as fruits and fish, will still be available from supermarkets, other retail outlets and online shopping delivery.
- Everyone should continue with the responsible practice of bagging waste before disposal.



What will supermarket operators do with the money they collect from the bag charge?

- Supermarket operators are strongly encouraged to use collected proceeds to support charitable programmes or sustainability-related initiatives.
- For greater accountability and transparency, they will also be required to publish information on the number of bags issued, amount of proceeds collected, and how these proceeds are used.

How else is NEA reducing disposable and packaging waste?

- Our efforts range from enhancing public education and awareness, to behavioural nudges, to addressing packaging waste generated by companies.
- Some examples are the nation-wide 'Say YES to Waste Less' campaign and the Mandatory Packaging Reporting framework.



For more information, please visit www.nea.gov.sg

Connect with us on 

February 2022

