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PLASTIC BAG BAN BACKFIRES

By Michael Stephen

<https://www.msn.com/en-xl/news/other/how-morocco-s-ban-backfired-and-plastic-bags-are-now-more-present-than-ever/ar-AA1wzZQc>

I have been reading in Hesperess Morocco News how Morocco's ban backfired and plastic bags are now more present than ever.

Salwa Bardai, a parliamentarian, is reported as saying "alternatives should not make plastic bags seem like the more convenient or superior option," suggesting that "the lack of widely available alternatives may be why enforcement and monitoring efforts have not been as effective as expected."

Driss Sentissi, head of the Popular Movement Party, said "Consumers in souks still prefer plastic bags because they're free, while other types often come at a cost." To tackle this, he stressed the need to offer affordable alternatives for lower-income groups."

Bar Sentissidai said "Plastic manufacturers requested alternative solutions to avoid bankruptcy and layoffs," explaining that "the failure to provide these solutions likely contributed to the continuation of the industry, possibly in an unregulated and illegal manner."

Meanwhile, the Industry Ministry has allocated 200 million MAD to support operators affected by Law No. 77.15. Nineteen other companies received support from the Imtiaz Program for producing alternative solutions, with a total allocation of 52.4 million MAD.

The government could have saved this money, while at the same time providing consumers with the plastic bags they need, and the plastics industry the customers they need, by requiring local factories to make the polyethylene bags biodegradable, at little or no extra cost. This has already been done in Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries. The bags would not then create microplastics or cause persistent plastic pollution See www.biodeg.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/BPA-Position-paper-1.12.24.pdf

I suspect that the Moroccan government have been misled by the EU into not adopting this eminently sensible solution. See <https://www.biodeg.org/eu-news/>

UNDP

I have just finished reading a 72-page glossy document entitled "Combatting plastic pollution for sustainable development." This must have put a large amount of public money into the pockets of officials and consultants, but it tells us nothing new.

It tells us how plastic pollution undermines sustainable development, but there must be very few environmentalists or people in the plastics industry or in government who are not well aware of that already.

As usual with publications of this kind the document focuses on reducing production and managing the plastic which gets collected “piloting and scaling up innovative circular solutions and environmentally sound alternatives, including reuse, refill and eco-design and improving waste management systems.”

We have heard all this before, but even the UNDP must realise that it will be many years (if ever) before their policies succeed in preventing the escape of waste plastics into the open environment, and there is nothing in this 72 page document to explain how they could deal with this substantial fraction of plastic waste.

While they pay lip-service to Materials Innovation, they appear to be unaware of the technology invented by polymer scientists and commercially available today, to prevent the accumulation of plastic waste which has escaped into the open environment, and especially the oceans. See www.biodeg.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/BPA-Position-paper-1.12.24.pdf

SO-CALLED COMPOSTABLE PLASTICS

There is an article in Chemistry World entitled “Cleaning up the Compostable Plastic Mess” www.chemistryworld.com/features/clearing-up-the-compostable-plastic-mess/4020481.article which says:

“Rather than a potential triumph, the compostable plastics we use look increasingly like a tragedy. When the BBC’s Blue Planet II aired in 2017 the material became public enemy number one, and half of British people said they’d pay more to avoid plastic waste. Compostable plastics are offered as a solution, yet they typically can’t go on your compost heap at home. Worse still, few UK facilities can compost them,” reveals Philippa Roberts, co-founder and chief executive officer of Binit Group, in Exeter, UK.

“Rather than composting, in the UK food waste typically goes to anaerobic digestion, in which bacteria mostly chew it up to make fertiliser and methane gas. But digesters can’t break down most compostable packaging. Yet, Roberts tells Chemistry World, packaging still gets included with food, only to be separated out at anaerobic digesters and then sent to incinerators. ‘This is nuts,’ she says. ‘Why are we putting all this in the composting and then pulling it back out again and burning it?’

See <https://www.biodeg.org/subjects-of-interest/composting/>