



Nearly one-third of McDonald's shareholders support *As You Sow* proposal to phase out polystyrene foam

May 25, 2017 – Oak Brook, IL – 32.3% of McDonald's Corp. shareholders supported a proposal from *As You Sow* asking the company to phase out harmful expanded polystyrene (EPS) foam packaging globally, according to vote results announced at its annual meeting May 24. The vote far exceeds the average voting result of 20% for social and environmental issue proposals.

McDonald's has phased out EPS foam beverage cups in the United States but [continues to use them](#) in foreign markets identified as having high levels of plastics deposition onto land and waterways including Hong Kong and parts of the Philippines. EPS foam used for coffee cups, takeout containers and packing materials, is rarely recycled. It is often swept into waterways and is one of the top items found in ocean beach cleanups.

"The company was concerned enough about the environmental impact of polystyrene 27 years ago to stop using clamshell EPS foam-based burger containers," said Conrad MacKerron, *As You Sow* Senior Vice President. "It's disconcerting that it did not follow through to fully remove polystyrene across its packaging system. This vote sends a signal to management that it's time to finish the job."

McDonald's phase out of foam burger containers in 1990 which, along with other changes in packaging, [saved](#) the company an estimated \$6 million per year, and in the decade following these actions, helped the company reduce restaurant waste by 30 percent, according to the Environmental Defense Fund. *As You Sow* was a [catalyst](#) for McDonald's to phase out use of foam cups in the U.S. in 2013.

In April, *As You Sow* withdrew a shareholder proposal with Target Corp. asking the company to phase out EPS foam packaging in its e-commerce operations after it [agreed](#) to work with its value chain and industry peers to discuss replacing foam with less harmful alternatives.

15 major brands including *Coca-Cola Co*, *Danone*, *Dow Chemical*, *L'Oreal*, *Marks & Spencer*, *Mars*, *PepsiCo*, *Procter & Gamble*, and *Unilever* recommended replacement of EPS foam as a packaging material in a [report](#) released in January by the Ellen MacArthur Foundation.

The International Agency for Research on Cancer has determined that styrene, used in the production of polystyrene, is a possible human carcinogen. EPS foam packaging materials break down into small indigestible pellets which animals mistake for food, resulting in death to birds, fish and other marine animals. Foam may also pose a higher risk to marine animals than other plastics; research indicates it can accumulate high concentrations of water borne toxins in a short time frame.

Nine countries and more than 100 U.S. cities or counties have banned or restricted foam packaging.

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As You Sow is a nonprofit organization that promotes environmental and social corporate responsibility through shareholder advocacy, coalition building, and innovative legal strategies. For more information visit www.asyousow.org.