



As You Sow asks four global brands to phase out polystyrene foam

15 global industry leaders endorse report recommending replacement of polystyrene and PVC

Oakland, CA – February 6, 2017 – *As You Sow* has asked four major U.S. companies that use harmful polystyrene foam packaging -- Amazon, McDonald's, Target, and Walmart -- to make plans to phase it out. A new report, endorsed by the leaders of 15 global brands, has also called for replacing polystyrene globally.

[“The New Plastics Economy – Catalyzing Action,”](#) released in mid-January by the Ellen MacArthur Foundation recommends replacement of polystyrene (PS), expanded polystyrene (EPS), and polyvinyl chloride (PVC) as packaging materials. The report was endorsed by the leaders of 15 big brands including *Coca-Cola Co, Danone, Dow Chemical, L’Oreal, Marks & Spencer, Mars, PepsiCo, Procter & Gamble, and Unilever*. Dow is a manufacturer of polystyrene. It also calls for a global protocol to reduce the number of plastics in use to those that are least toxic and most recyclable.

The International Agency for Research on Cancer has determined that styrene, used in the production of polystyrene, is a possible human carcinogen. Polystyrene 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. Foam packaging materials break down into small indigestible pellets which animals mistake for food. Ingestion can result in death as demonstrated in birds, turtles, and whales.

This year, *As You Sow* filed a shareholder proposal with McDonald's Corp., which successfully phased out foam beverage cups in the United States but continues to use it in foreign markets. Dunkin' Brands has committed to phase out foam cups, but has not yet done so. “We are pleased to have been a [catalyst](#) for McDonald's to phase out use of foam cups in the U.S. in 2013. Now it needs to finish the job,” said Conrad MacKerron, *As You Sow* Senior Vice President.

Resolutions were also filed with Amazon and Target, and the group is in dialogue with Walmart, which use polystyrene foam as packing material in their e-commerce operations. The proposals urge the companies to assess the environmental impacts of continued use and to develop a timeline for phase out. Texts of the proposals can be found [here](#).

“Having the leaders of more than a dozen global brands call for replacement of polystyrene sends a powerful message to industry to redesign consumer packaging materials to be less toxic and more recyclable,” said MacKerron.”

The MacArthur report says replacement of PVC, EPS, and PS would enhance recycling economics and reduce their potential negative impact as substances of concern. The report notes that EPS is often used for takeout food packaging but is rarely recycled and becomes heavily contaminated with waste food, reducing its recycling potential. Antigua and Barbuda, Bangladesh, Barbados, France, Guyana, Haiti, Rwanda, Taiwan and states in India and Malaysia have enacted bans on foam packaging. More than 100 U.S. cities or counties have banned or restricted foam packaging.



Ikea and Dell have begun to phase out use of foam packing in their e-commerce operations. In announcing its commitment to phase out EPS last year, Peter Larsson, Packaging Sustainability Leader at IKEA [stated](#), “Why should we fill the air in our flat packs with something that is more dangerous than the air itself?”

As You Sow’s mission is to promote environmental and social corporate responsibility through shareholder advocacy, coalition building, and innovative legal strategies. Learn more at www.asyousow.org.

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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.