



Target Agrees to Engage Corporate Peers on Phase out of Polystyrene Foam Packaging in E-Commerce

As You Sow Withdraws Shareholder Proposal as Result of Company's Willingness to Engage Value Chain

Oakland, CA – April 5, 2017 – *As You Sow* has withdrawn a shareholder proposal with Target Corp. that asks the company to phase out use of polystyrene foam packaging in its e-commerce operations, as a result of the company's willingness to work with its value chain and industry peers to discuss replacing foam with less harmful alternatives.

Polystyrene foam used for beverage cups, takeout containers, and packing materials is rarely recycled. Most used foam ends up in landfills where it can remain for hundreds of years. Due to its light weight, it becomes readily airborne and is often swept into waterways. Foam packaging materials in water break down into small indigestible pellets, which marine animals mistake for food. Ingestion of polystyrene can result in illness, death, and the destruction of marine ecosystems. More than 100 U.S. cities or counties, and nine countries, have banned or restricted foam packaging in various forms.

In light of these concerns, *As You Sow* filed shareholder proposals with [Target](#) and [Amazon.com](#) asking the companies to assess the reputational, financial, and operational risks associated with continued use of foam packing materials and a timeline to phase out its use.

Target has acknowledged concern about polystyrene foam production, the limited availability of recycling options, and foam's role in contributing to plastic pollution on land and in waterways. The company states that it does not use polystyrene foam as a packing option in materials it ships directly to consumers. However, foam remains as a packing material in goods from third parties who sell through Target's online operations. The company has agreed to engage its value chain and industry peers to discuss replacing foam with more environmentally sustainable alternatives.

"We are pleased that Target has committed to work with corporate partners and peers to press for alternatives to environmentally harmful foam," said Conrad MacKerron, *As You Sow* Senior Vice President. "With readily available alternatives for many applications, companies should stop using foam. This will reduce the level of plastics that find their way into lakes and oceans where they can do great harm." Dell and Ikea have previously announced reduction or phase out of polystyrene foam as a packing material in favor of safer, more sustainable materials like molded pulp.

McDonald's Corp. switched from foam to paper cups in 2013 after a shareholder engagement with *As You Sow*. However, the company still uses foam in other locations, including Hong Kong and the Philippines, where waterways are heavily polluted with plastic and foam. *As You Sow* filed a shareholder proposal with McDonald's this year, asking it to replace foam cups globally.

These corporate engagements are part of an [initiative](#) by *As You Sow* to move companies using disposable plastics to recycle, redesign, reduce, or phase them out as quickly as possible. Scientists estimate that oceans already contain 150 million tons of plastic, with 8 million tons added every year — that is equivalent to a garbage truck load dumped into the world's waterways *every minute*. One



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recent study predicted oceans will contain more plastic than fish by 2050 if action isn't taken quickly to dramatically reduce the flow of plastics into waterways. Previous research by *As You Sow* concluded that \$8 billion in recyclable plastic packaging is discarded in the U.S. annually.

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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. www.asyousow.org