



McDonald's Promises to Eliminate Foam Packaging by 2019 in Response to *As You Sow* Challenge

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Oakland, CA – In a win for the health of world oceans, McDonald's Corp. has agreed to end use of harmful polystyrene foam packaging globally by the end of this year following engagement by shareholder advocacy group *As You Sow*.

Rarely recycled, expanded polystyrene foam used in beverage cups and takeout containers is a frequent component of beach litter, breaking down into indigestible pellets, which marine animals mistake for food, resulting in deaths of marine animals.

A shareholder [proposal](#) filed by *As You Sow* urging the company to phase out of polystyrene was [supported](#) by 32% of shares voted (share value \$26 billion) in May 2017. McDonald's phased out foam cups for hot beverages in the United States after engagement with *As You Sow* in 2012, but [continued to use them](#) in foreign markets like Hong Kong and the Philippines identified as having high levels of plastics deposition into waterways. It also continued to use foam for cold beverages and food trays in some U.S. markets.

McDonald's has posted a [statement](#) on its corporate website that it plans to eliminate foam packaging from its global system by the end of 2018. The company said "the environmental impact of our packaging is a top priority" and that eliminating foam is an important step "that will continue to raise the bar for our system and our industry."

Polystyrene has been widely used for single-use containers across the world for decades, but in recent years its negative environmental and health profile have led major companies to drop it. Its hazardous constituent chemicals have been shown to accumulate water borne toxins in a short time frame, and the International Agency for Research on Cancer has determined that styrene, used in the production of polystyrene, is a possible human carcinogen.

"We congratulate McDonald's management for removing the last vestiges of polystyrene foam from its global packaging stream," said Conrad MacKerron, Senior Vice President at *As You Sow*, who specializes in waste and recycling issues. "This sends an important message to other quick service food companies who may still be using foam. We also hope McDonald's will next turn its attention to other single use items like plastic straws and cup lids that pose hazards to marine animals and add to the tsunami of plastic waste afflicting world oceans."

Nine countries and more than 100 U.S. cities or counties have banned or restricted foam packaging. 15 major brands including Coca-Cola Co, Danone, Dow Chemical, L'Oreal, Marks & Spencer, Mars, PepsiCo, Procter & Gamble, and Unilever recommended replacement of polystyrene foam as a packaging material in a report released in 2017 by the New Plastics Economy Project of the Ellen MacArthur Foundation.



As You Sow refiled its shareholder proposal for 2018 but intends to withdraw it based on this action by the company.

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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. See our resolutions [here](#).