

Payment for plastic bags to become obligatory in all shops

- From Friday, providing plastics bags at check-outs or any plastic materials for home delivery will be prohibited at points sale of goods and products.
- Catalonia has led the way through a voluntarily agreement with the commercial sector to stop these bags being given away free
- By 2012, consumption had already dropped by 50% from 2007 and the target is now a 90% reduction by 2020



In the context of [Law 5/2017, of 28 March, on fiscal, administrative and financial measures and the public sector](#), on Thursday (30th March) the Official Journal of the Government of Catalonia (DOGC) published a number of modifications to the consolidated text of the law on waste regulation, to include the prohibition of providing free bags at check-outs or plastic materials for home delivery,

including general plastic, oxo-degradable plastic and biodegradable plastic, while excluding compostable plastics that meet the requirements of standard UNE-EN 13432 or equivalent, at the point of sale of goods and products.

The measure, which comes into force on Friday (31st March), will apply to all shops in Catalonia, whatever their business, whenever the sale of products involves plastic bags.

Consumer information campaign

To guarantee publicity for the regulation, the Waste Agency of Catalonia (ARC) will soon be launching an information campaign targeting shops and the general public to inform them that plastic bags will no longer be free and explain the alternatives available for shopping.

Under the [Bag Agreement](#), in 2015, the ARC and the commercial sector agreed that customers should pay for this item in all Catalan shops. Once more,

Catalonia is leading the way in Spain in applying legal measures to reduce plastic bag consumption.

Reducing plastic waste

The Bag Agreement, signed in 2009 and renewed in May 2016, is an unprecedented agreement between the Government of Catalonia and all distribution and manufacturing organisations in Catalonia and Spain. For the first time, it established a collaborative framework to reduce consumption of plastic bags with handles by 50% by 2012. The target was easily reached, reducing per capita consumption from 327 bags a year to 156. However, analysis revealing unequal performance between different types of store showed that small shops required assistance in adopting more demanding measures, which were already being voluntarily implemented by large distributors to reduce bag consumption, through an all-party consensus. Specifically, while all large stores had considerably reduced distribution of these bags, mainly by making customers pay for them, small and medium-sized local shops were having problems in applying payment voluntarily.

Plastic bags not only use resources in their production, they also affect the environment in other ways. Because they are so light, they can be easily blown around in the wind and end up being eaten by animals or blocking pipes and conduits. They can even reach the sea, causing serious harm to marine ecosystems.

30 March 2017