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**Food Processing and
Packaging Machinery**

India: Numerous bans are intended to reduce the amount of plastic packaging waste

In India, the demand for packaged food and beverages is increasing. To a large extent, they are packaged or filled in plastic packaging. The mountain of plastic packaging waste is increasing year by year, polluting the environment and polluting rivers and oceans. The Indian government and many states want to reduce plastic packaging waste and have introduced bans on the use of certain disposable plastic packaging

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India

With its 1.33 billion people, India has the second largest population in the world after China. They have to be supplied with food and beverages.

The country is rich in raw materials and the Indian food industry has developed well in recent years. Food processing represents an important segment of the Indian economy. However, according to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, nearly 40 percent of the food produced in India is wasted or lost in various ways. In addition to poor transport possibilities and a lack of cold chains, missing or defective packaging is also a reason for the high food losses.

A growing middle class, rising incomes, further urbanization and an ever-increasing spread of modern trade structures such as supermarkets are causing the demand for modern processed and packaged food products, especially convenience products, to rise.

Despite increasing urbanization, almost twice as many people in India will continue to live in rural areas as in large cities. In rural regions and smaller cities (2nd tier and 3rd tier) purchasing power is increasing. The rural population and also consumers in the lower income groups buy more high-quality food. Food and beverage manufacturers are therefore adapting their packaging sizes to consumer needs and offering small and smallest packaging units. Water bottled in PET bottles makes it possible to supply the population with safe drinking water.

All of this is increasing the demand for plastic food and beverage packaging. Due to the climatic conditions in the country, especially plastic packaging with appropriate barrier properties offers a high degree of safety for the packaged product. They make a major contribution to ensuring that food reaches the consumer safely and significantly reduces overall food loss.

According to the British market research institute Euromonitor International¹, 68 billion pieces of plastic packaging for food and beverages were sold in India in

¹ Euromonitor International 2019.

2005. In 2019 the figure was 315 billion units and demand is expected to rise to 491 billion units by 2024. This also increases the amount of plastic packaging waste, which is a burden on the environment due to the lack of orderly collection, separation and processing structures. In India there is only an informal sector. Ragpickers collect plastic packaging waste, which is sold to plastic processing companies via various dealers.

According to the Indian government², the share of plastic in total solid waste in India is around eight percent. The effects of plastic waste can be seen in the two major river systems that flow through India. According to the Helmholtz-Institute³, 4.81 million tons of plastic waste are discharged into the oceans via the Indus River and 3.02 million tons via the Meghna-Brahmaputra Ganges every year.

India wants to ban disposable plastic nationwide

On World Environment Day, which took place in India on 5 June 2018, the Indian government announced a legislative initiative to ban the manufacture, use and storage of disposable plastic products nationwide from 2022. This would also affect plastic packaging for food and beverages, as the overwhelming majority of products purchased by Indian consumers are packaged in plastic packaging. According to a study by pwc and FICCI⁴, this would have a major impact on the industry. The prices for the packaged products, especially for low priced products such as shampoo sachets, detergent single packs, biscuits, etc. would rise, so that especially the lower income groups would no longer be able to afford them. A ban on small PET bottles is also being considered. Package sizes of 200 ml and less are very popular for water and soft drinks, as these can also be afforded by low-income groups of buyers.

² <https://phys.org/news/2019-10-plastic-recycling-india.html>.

³ Export of plastic debris by rivers into the Sea, Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research UFZ.

⁴ Plastic Packaging - the sustainable and smart choice. Why banning plastic packaging in Indian FMCG is not a viable option.

After massive objections, Indian Prime Minister Modi weakened the ban in October 2019. Instead of generally banning disposable plastic packaging, the aim is now to withdraw disposable plastics from circulation by 2022.

Regulations in the Indian states

In 25 of India's 29 states, regulations are already in place today that prohibit or restrict the use of disposable plastic products. These mostly refer to the ban on thin plastic shopping bags. In some states, however, there are also bans on individual plastic packaging.

Maharashtra

Maharashtra was the first state of India to introduce a ban on plastics (March 2018). This also affects plastic packaging. Compared to other states, the ban is applied strictly. Anyone who breaks the law and uses or sells disposable plastics will face a fine of up to 25,000 Indian rupees (about USD 350 in 2019). Repeated offences are punishable by up to 3 months in prison. At the end of 2018, nearly 4,000 companies and manufacturing plants that traded in banned plastic materials were closed down.⁵ [1]

With regard to packaging, among other things, are prohibited:

- PET bottles for drinking water with less than 200 ml content
- Mineral water bag made of plastic
- Disposable articles made of polystyrene and other plastics such as plates, spoons, containers and straws

For plastic packaging are permitted:

- PET bottles with more than 200 ml content and a deposit and refund price
- Recyclable multi-layer plastic packaging for packaging chips, chocolate, shampoo, etc.
- Plastic packaging for medicines, medical instruments and devices

⁵ <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/2019/02/india-single-use-plastic-bans-maharashtra-tamil-nadu/>.

- Plastic packaging with a thickness of more than 50 microns and a weight of at least 2 grams for sealing food. The packaging material must bear the manufacturer's details, the type of plastic, the code number and the repurchase price.

Tamil Nadu

In the "Announcement under Rule 110" of 5 June 2018, products made of disposable plastic are prohibited in Tamil Nadu from January 2019. Tamil Nadu was thus the fourth state to introduce such a ban.

The following packaging is prohibited:

- Plastic bags and packages for filling drinking water
- Plastic film / cling film for the packaging of food

These disposable plastic products may not be manufactured, stored, sold, transported or distributed.

The following are not covered by the ban

- Plastic pouch packaging in which the products are sealed directly by the manufacturing or processing company.
- Plastic packaging for milk and dairy products, oil medicine
- Packaging for medical equipment

Odisha

According to a statement by the Odisha Ministry of Forestry and Environment⁶ dated 30 September 2019, the state government has issued a directive prohibiting the production, sale, trade, import, storage, transport and distribution of polyethylene and disposable plastic in six cities, including Bhubaneswar, Cuttack, Rourkela, Sambalpur, Berhampur and Puri.

⁶ <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/environment/pollution/odisha-bans-single-use-plastic-in-all-urban-areas-from-oct-2/articleshow/71396523.cms?from=mdr>.

The following packaging is prohibited:

- PET bottles for bottled drinking water of less than 200 ml
- Pouches for storing liquids and containers of all shapes and sizes, excluding packaging for the sale of milk and milk by-products
- The use of polyethylene films with a thickness of less than 50 microns for the storage, transport, dispensing or packaging of articles, goods or foodstuffs, consumables, packaging of milk and dairy products and edible oil in sealed form.

Permitted are among others

- Plastic cups for dairy products including quark and ice cream
- Packaging made of polyethylene for the packaging of products for the health sector, e.g. drugs
- Blood transport bags
- Syringe, sample or specimen bags
- Resealable bags
- Plastic packaging for medical instruments and accessories
- Plastic packaging material for wrapping articles at the manufacturing stage

Karnataka

As early as 2015, the government of the state of Karnataka banned the use of all plastics with a thickness of less than forty micrometers. In March 2016, the government issued a notification banning the use of all products made of polystyrene and other plastics, regardless of their thickness. As a result, manufacturers were also not allowed to manufacture, store, deliver or transport plastics. The use of plastic for packaging milk and dairy products and for packaging in the health sector is exempt from the ban.

Himachal Pradesh

In a communication dated 6 July 2018, the state government of the Indian state of Himachal Pradesh⁷ [3] banned the use of many products made of disposable plastic. This includes plastic carrier bags regardless of their thickness and size, as well as all plastic items that are only used once and are not made of biodegradable materials. Anyone who violates the ban can be fined from Rs 500 to Rs 25,000.

Telangana

In June 2018, the government of the Indian state of Telangana⁸ announced a ban on disposable plastics.

The following packaging is covered by the ban:

- Drinking water plastic and Tetra bottles
- Plastic films with a thickness of less than 50 micron

All municipal authorities are urged not to use the banned disposable plastic products. For the general public, the use of plastic bags was strictly prohibited, while the use of disposable plastic was kept within limits.

Additional State Decrees⁹

Further federal states

Uttar Pradesh and Karnataka have also banned products made of disposable plastics, but have not used this term in their notifications. While Karnataka's announcement was made in 2016, Uttar Pradesh announced the ban on 15 August 2018. Sikkim was far ahead of all these states, but only with regard to plastic bags, which were banned in 1998. In 2016, a ban on the use of plastic bottles and disposable tableware and cutlery made of polystyrene and styrofoam was announced, but not a general ban on disposable plastic.

⁷ <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/waste/indian-states-implementation-of-plastic-ban-a-mixed-bag-62664>.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/waste/indian-states-implementation-of-plastic-ban-a-mixed-bag-62664>.

From 25 October 2018, the government in Bihar imposed a similar ban. However, it was limited to the use of plastic carrier bags. Their manufacture, import, storage, distribution, sale and transport were prohibited. The only exception was the use of plastic bags of less than 50 microns for the storage of biological-medical waste.

Andhra Pradesh made a similar announcement in October 2018, as did Assam and Meghalaya in August 2018.

Thus, there is almost no Indian state that has not at least banned the use of plastic diaper bags. In many Indian states, the announced bans on disposable plastics remained announcements and have not yet been implemented in a sustainable manner.

Note

The content of this article has been carefully researched and compiled, but does not replace legal advice in individual cases and the reading of the respective legal texts. No responsibility is taken for the correctness and completeness of the information provided, nor for any changes made in the meantime.



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