



# #TooCoolforPlastic

Iceland's Plastic Commitment.

**Iceland**  
*Doing it Right*

Looking back on our progress in 2018

#TooCoolforPlastic



# Caring for our planet



In January 2018, Iceland committed to becoming the first major retailer globally to eliminate plastic packaging from all of its own label products by the end of 2023.

Over **1,500**  
tonnes of plastic removed

Our announcement generated global media attention as well as support from a number of key stakeholders including the Prime Minister, DEFRA and Secretary of State Michael Gove among many others. Following the announcement, Greenpeace launched a petition calling on the top four supermarkets to follow Iceland's lead.

A year on from making our commitment we have led the way in the retail sector by implementing a number of operational and product changes that have tackled the issue of plastic directly, as well as raising awareness of the issue and encouraging behaviour change amongst consumers. These changes have impacted every member of Iceland staff from head office to Iceland's 900+ stores. We are working to source, test and bring solutions to market to contribute towards the fulfilment of our commitment and to continue the fight against the scourge of plastic pollution.

During 2018 we were successful in removing over 1,500 tonnes of plastic from the 13,000 tonnes used annually in our packaging, and we have a clear action plan to fulfil our ambitious commitment.

# #TooCoolforPlastic



# Getting our own house in order

Iceland had made moves to reduce single use plastic prior to its campaign launch. In late 2017, for instance, we stopped selling plastic straws.

However, the first step in the campaign was to engage our workforce. Before we went public with our plans in January 2018 we stopped buying plastic bottles of water and soft drinks for our staff restaurant, meeting rooms and vending machines, replacing them with glass bottles and cans. Just changing those used in meetings saved 12,000 plastic bottles a year.

We also stopped using single use coffee cups and encouraged all colleagues to buy reusable cups from our in-house Costa coffee bar, selling more than 200 in the first couple of days that they were on sale. This change saved 91,000 non-recyclable cups and lids a year being sent to landfill.

On the morning of the announcement every head office colleague found a refillable aluminium Iceland #toocoolforplastic water bottle waiting for them on their desk. We adjusted the chilled water dispensing mechanism on our refreshment vending machines so that these bottles and other containers could now be refilled there free of charge, allowing us to end the use of disposable plastic cups - a further saving of 124,000 non-recyclable containers a year that we have taken out of our business.

**227,000**

**non-recyclable and plastic containers saved at our head office alone last year**



# Product packaging innovation

Since making the commitment, we have reduced or removed plastic packaging across 81 lines. This has meant working closely with existing and new suppliers, and finding innovative solutions across the supply chain.



## Fresh produce packaging

In September 2018 we began the national roll-out of a recycled and recyclable paper band for bananas – the first in any UK supermarket – designed to replace 10 million plastic bags each year.

At the end of the year we switched lemons from plastic packaging into cotton net bags with a paper label. Work also continued through the year to trial the movement of lines including mushrooms, strawberries and grapes out of plastic punnets into paper- and pulp-based moulded trays. These new formats will actually offer slightly extended shelf-life and so reduce food waste.

We already use paper bags for some of our potato range and are testing the feasibility of using these more widely, subject to supplier packing capabilities in the short term, and are exploring non-plastic alternative packaging for onions and other products, including citrus fruits, typically packed in plastic netting.



## Eggs

We began to move all of our eggs into boxes made from paper pulp in October 2018 and will complete the process by April 2019. This change alone will remove 600 tonnes of plastic a year from our stores.

## Black plastic meal trays

At the start of 2018, Iceland was using around 100 million black plastic (CPET) trays every year in our own label frozen ready meals and exclusive ready meal ranges. As these are largely unrecycled in the UK we set out to find an alternative and by December we had agreements in place with all of our suppliers to replace these with board-based trays, using FSC certified sustainable sources.

We have now agreed new materials and processes with all of our suppliers, and are making good progress in moving production. Over half of production has already switched and our own label ready meals will transfer entirely to board-based trays in the first half of 2019. Our exclusive Slimming World range will follow suit by the end of the year and Slimming World lasagnes have already been switched to recyclable aluminium trays.

Given the long shelf-life of frozen food, customers will see the new trays filter into stores to take the place of black plastic trays throughout 2019. This is a first in industry move.

We continue to evaluate further alternative material options for meal trays, including sugar beet, bagasse (from sugar cane) and bamboo.

Work is progressing to eliminate the thin plastic laminate used to seal our first generation of paper-based meal trays, so making them completely plastic-free. The optimum solution is likely to be a fully compostable pack. We are lobbying Government to make food waste collection from the home mandatory throughout the country, and to include compostable packaging within that system. This will drive investment in the facilities needed to compost packaging effectively, and so facilitate its much wider use.

We are also trialling both cellulose films and translucent paper-based alternatives to replace the plastic film currently used to cover meal trays.

## Other products

Non-plastic flow-wrap has been trialled on a number of products and we are working to overcome the remaining technical challenges to its roll-out. We will launch this where we can within the next year or so.

Fruitful discussions have been held with paper tub manufacturers and we are keeping track of developments and testing alternative surface treatments that have the potential to eliminate the need for plastic lamination. Over time these will provide potentially viable non-plastic solutions for lines such as cream, yogurt and ice cream.

We are also exploring potential alternatives for milk containers, and are considering a number of different solutions that could significantly reduce their plastic content. This has to be a longer term goal within our five-year plastic removal plan, because of the massive amount of investment that the dairy industry has made to integrate plastic into the milk bottling process.

“  
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# Taking action everyday

## Iceland reverse vending machines

In April 2018 Iceland became the first UK supermarket to install in-store reverse vending machines, in support of the Government's proposed Deposit Return Scheme in England. The six-month trial involved four machines fitted in England, Scotland and Wales at stores in Fulham, Wolverhampton, Musselburgh and Mold, as well as a machine for staff and visitor use at Iceland's head office in Deeside.

Since the launch of the trial six months ago, a total of 311,500 bottles have been scanned into the store reverse vending machines across the UK. In the month of November alone, a daily average of 2,583 bottles were recycled across the four sites, with an average of £250 refunded to customers per day.

Customers were highly supportive of the machines, with children playing an important part in encouraging their families to use them.

The trial, which will continue for a further six months, has already enabled Iceland to assess consumer reaction to reverse vending machines, as well as understanding their potential impact on in-store operations. The findings of the trial are to be used to inform future initiatives, and will be shared with DEFRA to inform the ongoing consultation for a national scheme.



**311,500**

**bottles scanned  
into our reverse  
vending machines**

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**Local councils spend around £60 million each year cleaning chewing gum up**



## New product development

As well as reducing plastic in our packaging, we have begun to target products which contain plastic themselves, and in August became the only supermarket chain in the UK to sell plastic-free chewing gum.

Simply Gum is made from all natural ingredients and is completely biodegradable, making it better for the environment. The gum is made from a tree sap called chicle which is extracted from the sapodilla tree, native to Central America.

With more than 100,000 tons of chewing gum being consumed every year, it is estimated that 95% of Britain's streets are now stained with the substance and local councils spend around £60 million each year cleaning it up.

The decision to offer our customers the option to have plastic-free chewing gum is part of our drive to provide shoppers with the choice of reducing their plastic footprint.

## In-store operations

In June, we began a trial to remove single-use plastic carrier bags from our tills. Following a successful trial, we removed these from all our stores in October and offered shoppers a 'bag for life' instead, made of recycled post-consumer plastic waste. Customers can also purchase large woven bags made from post-consumer waste, or hessian bags.

We are carefully monitoring the usage of 'bags for life' as they actually contain more plastic than 5p carrier bags; however their robust design means that they can be used multiple times. To reduce plastic use we need to encourage customers to use fewer bags or to bring their own bags to stores. We intend to step up customer communication in 2019 to encourage and incentivise customers to bring their own bags with them when they go shopping.

We remove all secondary plastic packaging waste from our stores and return it to depot for recycling. We have also eliminated plastic tubes from our till rolls during 2018, saving over 600,000 tubes annually.

# A growing momentum for real change

## Wider initiatives and activity

As well as introducing industry-leading initiatives and plastic-free replacements across our packaging, we have established an authoritative position on the topic of plastic reduction over the past year to further raise awareness of the issue and generate support across the industry. This has been achieved through leading the conversation with the media, talking to policy makers, and forming powerful partnerships with like-minded organisations.

In May, A Plastic Planet launched the world's first Plastic Free Trust Mark in a move that aimed to revolutionise how shoppers buy their food and drink. The Trust Mark has been designed to instantly inform and empower consumers to make plastic-free choices, and Iceland became the first major retailer to pledge to implement the Trust Mark on its plastic-free product packaging. The Trust Mark is beginning to be rolled out across plastic-free lines, providing a clear indicator to shoppers and marking the progress of Iceland's plastic removal process.

Our Managing Director, Richard Walker, has acted as a vocal commentator on the topic of plastic since Iceland made its landmark announcement. Richard has represented the business community and retail industry at a national level, through wide-reaching media opportunities. Richard has also spoken about the subject at a community level, for example at the Kendal Mountain Festival and Countryfile Live, to support efforts to inform and engage with members of the public.

**“  
Iceland is removing plastic packaging from its own label products by 2023 for one simple reason: because we care.**

Richard Walker,  
Managing Director



## Community activism

Iceland Foods Charitable Foundation (IFCF) and national marine conservation charity Surfers Against Sewage (SAS), have announced a new two year partnership to grow the 'Plastic Free Communities' movement across the UK, together mobilising 100,000 community volunteers.

The exciting new partnership will expand SAS's Plastic Free Communities work across coastal, rural and urban areas throughout the UK as well as supporting The Big Spring Beach Clean: Summit To Sea in April 2019 and 2020. This will be the first time

the 'Clean' series has incorporated mountain and street cleans alongside rivers and beaches.

The partnership will also include the launch of the very first national Plastic Free Community Awards, recognising outstanding achievements that are leading the way in the fight against avoidable single-use plastic. Taking place in 2019 and 2020, the awards will celebrate individuals, local businesses, artists, schools, campaigners, volunteers and other champions tackling the scourge plastic pollution.

**100,000**  
community volunteers mobilised

## Iceland leading supermarket action

The full extent of UK supermarkets' contribution to the plastic waste problem was revealed for the first time in November by the Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) and Greenpeace.

Their survey of Britain's largest supermarkets and grocery chains ranked retailers based on their commitments to reduce single-use plastic, eliminate non-recyclable plastic packaging, engage with supply chains and transparent reporting. Iceland came out ahead of the pack thanks to an ambitious plan for phasing out own-brand plastic packaging within five years.

**Iceland**  
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**#TooCoolforPlastic**

**Iceland**

**the food**  
**WAREHOUSE**  
Iceland