

PRIVATE BAG BO 199  
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MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION AND TOURISM

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The Editor  
All Media Houses

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **PLASTIC CARRIER BAG BAN TO EFFECT ON 1<sup>ST</sup> NOVEMBER 2018**

The Ministry of Environment, Natural Resources Conservation and Tourism would like to inform the public, business sector and other stakeholders that the Waste Management (Plastic Carrier Bags and Plastic Flat Bags Prohibition) Regulations, 2018 will come into operation on the 1<sup>st</sup> November 2018. This means that from the 1<sup>st</sup> of November 2018 the use of plastic carrier bags and plastic flat bags will no longer be allowed in Botswana. The time in between until the 1<sup>st</sup> of November is to allow for the public and affected industries to put in place environmentally friendly packaging systems or alternatives to the plastic bag.

According to the regulations, any person who manufactures, trades, imports, possesses, or for commercial purposes distributes a plastic carrier bag or plastic flat bag for use in Botswana will be committing an offence.

The ban will however not apply to the following for health and hygiene purposes:

- a. Bread bag- this refers to plastic bags used for packaging bread
- b. Plastic bin liner- refers to plastic bags used for lining refuse bins or refuse receptacles
- c. Barrier bag-thin or flimsy plastic bag used to separate products at final point of sale

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- d. Plastic refuse bag- plastic bag designed for carrying waste
- e. Primary packaging- refers to plastic packaging that is in direct contact with the product for purposes of containing the product during transportation or handling to the point of distribution or point of use.

The public is further informed that any person contravening the regulations on the prohibition of the plastic carrier bag and plastic flat bag will be committing an offence and will be liable to the following:

- a. For a first offender, the plastic carrier bag or the flat bag will be confiscated.
- b. For a second or subsequent offence the person will be liable to a fine not exceeding P5, 000.00 or to a term of imprisonment not exceeding 30 days or both.

Several attempts have been made in the past to manage or control the proliferation of plastic carrier bags in the environment through various strategies such as public education and awareness on its proper use, recycling and minimisation of its use. Furthermore, compulsory standards were developed to regulate the thickness of the carrier bag. Despite all these initiatives the plastic bag continues to be an environmental nuisance with negative impact on the environs and domestic animals, thus eventually the decision to ban or prohibit its use in Botswana by Cabinet. The move to implement the ban of plastic carrier/flat bag follows long consultations (over a number of years) with stakeholders both Government and private sector.

### **Negative impacts of the plastic carrier/flat bags in the environment**

- a) Plastic is not biodegradable hence once deposited in the soil it persists in the environment for a long period of time.
- b) Plastics reduce the aesthetic value of the environment as they hang on trees and generally are widespread in the environment.
- c) Plastic have adverse impacts on human and animal health, for example, due to their impervious characteristic, they serve as a breeding ground for mosquitoes and other vermin. Animals, for instance die from choking when they eat plastic bags. Moreover plastics are harmful to livestock when digested as they disrupt the digestive process causing bloating and ultimately death of the animal.

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In making this decision Botswana joins a number of countries and cities around the world who have shifted towards the ban on the use of plastics as a pollution prevention measure. Regionally countries such as Rwanda and Kenya have already implemented the ban on plastic.

The Ministry has started the process of engaging with different stakeholders and communities to increase awareness of the plastic ban and encourage use of alternatives. More information on the plastic ban can be found on the Government Gazette of 1<sup>st</sup> June 2018, Statutory Instrument no. 74 of 2018, Waste Management (Plastic Carrier Bags and Plastic Flat Bags Prohibition) Regulations of 2018.

The Ministry will continue to explore ways for the effective management of waste in line with universally acceptable best practices with the intention to promote a clean and safe environment as part of its mandate.

Thank you.

A. Mmolawa

For/**PERMANENT SECRETARY**

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