

The Shoprite Group fights packaging waste to build a sustainable future

In line with the Shoprite Group's commitment to ensure that 100% of its plastic packaging is reusable and/or recyclable by 2025, it is now using the 4 000 tons of plastic returned annually to its distribution centres to produce its 100% recycled and recyclable plastic shopping bags.

Since the beginning of November 2019, plastic from the retail group's Centurion, Canelands and Cilmor distribution centres is being collected, converted into pellets and used to manufacture the plastic carrier bags for its supermarkets.

"This is the latest among the growing number of circular economy practices we are putting in place," explains Group Sustainability Manager, Sanjeev Raghubir.

While packaging protects and preserves products, the retailer recognises that it is a key driver of environmental degradation when not handled responsibly.

The Group plans for 100% of its plastic packaging to be reusable and/or recyclable by 2025, with an average of 30% recycled content to be used in all plastic packaging.

Suppliers are already being provided with reusable, returnable packing crates to minimise packaging.

In the last financial year it:

- Sold 645 million recyclable plastic bags made from 100% post-consumer material, diverting 7 095 tons of plastic from landfills;
- Sold 855 000 of its R3 "planet" bags and paid out more than R200 000 to customers in rebates for reusing the bag;
- Recycled 3 995 tons of plastic and 33 658 tons of cardboard through its distribution centres;
- Reused 2 781 tons of cardboard packaging in partnership with another retailer.

"Consumers are increasingly expecting recyclable packaging and they expect transparency from retailers regarding the environmental impact of their end-to-end operations," explains Raghubir.

In 2013 the Group became the first South African retailer to produce a verified, 100% recycled shopping bag. Shoprite, Checkers and Usave supermarkets introduced the "planet" bag in late 2018. Made from 100% recycled plastic, the sturdy reusable bags entitle customers to claim 50c off their total spend each time they present the bag at the till.

New standardised recycling instructions, as published by WWF-SA earlier this year, have been introduced to the 650 million recyclable plastic bags made from 100% post-consumer recycled material that the Group sells per annum. These On Pack Recycling Labels will be included on all new products and as packaging designs of existing products are updated, to equip customers with the correct recycling information.

The Shoprite Group recognises the important role it plays in the countries and communities in which it operates. This role extends beyond being Africa's most accessible and affordable retailer to include

promoting the collection, recovery and recycling of packaging materials while stimulating the recycling industry to create jobs and alleviate poverty.

Among its many initiatives, the Group launched Africa's Biggest Cleanup in July 2018. It continues to encourage community cleanup events hosted by its employees and the general public via actforchange.africa. The online platform allows any organisation to register cleanup events and to submit their waste collection data. In the past financial year, more than 800 cleanup events have been registered and 40 150 participants have collected 30 935 bags of waste.

Its Packa-Ching partner project "buys" recyclable materials from communities in exchange for credits which can be used to buy goods at many stores, including Shoprite, Usave and Checkers stores.

More information is available in the [Shoprite Holdings' 2019 Sustainability Report](#).

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