

Shoprite, Checkers shopping bags rated the best in independent test

Shoprite and Checkers “planet” bags, made from 100% recycled and recyclable plastic, have come out top in a Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) study of grocery carrier bags in terms of environmental and socio-economic performance.

The reusable “planet” bags, which are 70 microns thick (compared to the 24 microns for standard 24ℓ plastic bags), last for many shopping trips. They retail for R3 each in Shoprite and Checkers supermarkets throughout South Africa, and every time a customer re-uses the bag, they get 50c off their grocery purchase.

The CSIR’s Life Cycle Sustainability Assessment study looked at 16 different carrier bags including single-use and reusable plastic bags, biodegradable/compostable bags and paper bags to determine which was best.

The results showed that reusable, fossil-based plastic bags have a far lower environmental impact compared to the other bags, with the Shoprite and Checkers “planet” bags performing the best. The standard 24ℓ plastic bags from Shoprite and Checkers, made from 100% recycled plastic, also performed the best in its category.

The overall ranking using all indicators, including persistence, employment and affordability, showed that the best performing bag overall was “the reusable HDPE 70 µm bag (HDPE_70),” the CSIR said. Although it did not name the retailer, this bag is only used by the Shoprite Group. The CSIR added that “the more times a bag is reused, the better its performance; particularly from an environmental (and affordability) perspective.” .

The study, funded by the Department of Science and Innovation, was aimed at informing government, producers, retailers, and consumers about the environmental and socio-economic impacts of different types of carrier bags.

In the previous financial year, the Shoprite Group:

- sold 855 000 “planet” bags, and paid out more than R200 000 in rebates to its customers;
- diverted 7 095 tons of post-consumer plastic waste from landfills and the environment by using recycled plastic for its recyclable plastic bags;
- recycled 3 995 tons of plastic and 33 658 tons of cardboard through its distribution centres.

The Shoprite Group remains committed to being a responsible retailer while embedding circular economy practices into its business.

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