

FSA publishes new advice for businesses on using ocean bound plastics for food packaging

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) and Food Standards Scotland (FSS) have reviewed the [assessment](#) and have concluded there is not enough evidence to confirm the safety of this type of plastic used in food packaging and that it does not impact health.

Therefore, we are [advising businesses](#) not to use abandoned environmental plastic, including ocean bound plastic, in food packaging. This advice does not apply to recycled plastic from controlled environments such as UK kerbside collection, which can be safely used to package food.

“We acknowledge the benefits of recycling abandoned plastic that has been collected from the open environment, especially plastic in danger of entering waterways or oceans (ocean bound plastics). Such initiatives, if carried out appropriately, can protect the environment while supporting innovation and economic growth. However, our role is to ensure food is safe and we have concerns over the safety of these plastics, which we term abandoned environmental plastic, when used in their recycled form for products such as ready meal containers, fresh food trays and bottles.”

“Abandoned environmental plastic is a small percentage of the recycled plastic market. The majority comprises kerbside recycled plastics which are still viable for food contact material. Plastic materials collected from established and controlled environments such as UK kerbside collection systems have undergone substantial work in the past to ensure that they adhere to [current safety standards](#).”

“Unfortunately, we are currently not confident that the collection of abandoned environmental plastic, which is subsequently mechanically recycled, is meeting the same standards.”

“In light of this, we are advising businesses not to use this type of plastic in food packaging and to look for alternative uses for it.”

Dr James Cooper, Deputy Director of Food Policy at the FSA

“Recycling plastics into food grade packaging is done with upmost care using material collected from kerbside only to ensure that the plastic derives from food packaging, for food safety reasons. There are many products which can and are successfully made using ocean bound plastic, including non-food packaging, and we welcome this clarification from the FSA. Plastic pollution is an environmental disaster. We must eliminate problematic and unnecessary single use plastic and recycle plastic back into appropriate products and packaging, where possible. Most

supermarkets and the food brands they sell are members of The UK Plastics Pact and committed to this end. Through their actions, 33 billion plastic items have already been removed from shelves. But more needs to be done to deal with the legacy plastic pollution."

Helen Bird, Head of Materials Systems Transformation, WRAP

We work closely with industry bodies and consider any specific concerns they have about food grade recycled plastic, including the way it is marketed. Should there be any concerns about on pack labelling, please contact your [local food safety team](#).