



SEAFOOD INDUSTRY CALL TO ACTION

SOLVING FOR THE GLOBAL PLASTIC WASTE CRISIS

Every day, plastic flows into our natural environment at an unprecedented rate—a dump truck every minute into our oceans alone. In one year, this plastic waste adds up to 11 million metric tons and impacts over 2,100 species.^{i,ii} And as this crisis spreads to every corner of the globe, World Wildlife Fund (WWF) is leading the charge to unite industry leaders, the public, and policymakers to transform our material system toward a vision of *No Plastic in Nature by 2030*. While plastic can help make our hospitals safer, our food last longer, and our packages more efficient to ship, it has no place in nature.

The role of business is critical to fixing the broken plastic system and accelerating progress. Businesses are uniquely positioned to reduce waste through improved sourcing, design, and business model innovation within their own supply chains and by supporting recycling and composting system improvement efforts beyond their own supply chains. Through this lens, we find that as few as 100 companies have the potential to prevent roughly 10 million metric tons of the world's plastic waste per year.ⁱⁱⁱ Some of the world's biggest companies have already begun large-scale plastic commitments to reduce, reuse, re-source, and recycle.

Over 80% of ocean plastic originates from land-based sources, and around 20% of leakage comes from ocean-based sources like fisheries and fishing vessels (i.e., ghost gear).^{iv} And while ghost gear does not account for the largest volume, it is the deadliest form of marine plastic, as it unselectively catches and entangles wildlife. Thus, the seafood industry both impacts and is impacted by plastic pollution. The seafood industry and key stakeholders across the industry—including fishers, aquaculture operators, processors, distributors, retailers, and restaurants—have an important role in contributing to the solution for plastic pollution. Bold and ambitious action is needed. Each year, 5.7% of all fishing nets, 8.6% of all traps and pots, and 29% of all fishing lines used globally are lost in the oceans. It is not only the seafood industry that contributes to marine plastic pollution; valuable marine resources are also threatened by plastic waste of all kinds. The number of species affected by either entanglement or ingestion of plastic debris has doubled since 1997, from 267 to 557 species. Plastic waste poses economic cost to the industry, both in terms of threatening species of commercial value and by causing navigational hazards that can affect a vessel's propulsion and maneuverability.^v

WWF recommends the seafood industry take action to reduce plastic waste in the following ways:

- **Brands, packaging suppliers, and retailers are encouraged to join WWF's [ReSource: Plastic](#) platform to turn ambitious plastic reduction commitments into meaningful, measurable action.** Using the ReSource Footprint Tracker, WWF's team helps businesses track year-over-year progress toward public commitments and provides expert guidance across a business' entire plastic portfolio. By participating in this transparent reporting platform, companies can best determine where their most negative impact is and where they should be engaging their partners or their sectors to take action for the greatest impact. Alternatively, small-scale, local businesses are encouraged to survey their waste and determine end-of-life fate to eliminate problematic materials and transition to sustainable solutions where possible—see [Plastic IQ](#) for more information.
- **Join the [U.S. Plastics Pact](#),** a collaborative, solutions-driven consortium to unify diverse public-private stakeholders across the plastics value chain and rethink the way we design, use, and reuse plastic in the United States.
- **Join the [Global Ghost Gear Initiative](#),** a global alliance of the fishing industry, private sector, corporations, NGOs, academia, and governments focused on solving the problem of lost and abandoned fishing gear worldwide.
- **Eliminate use of expanded polystyrene coolers across the value chain, especially on ships and at ports,** shifting instead to reusable or recyclable B2B packaging and cooling methods.
- **Implement reuse systems wherever possible, transitioning away from single-use plastic products.** To begin, start with reuse pilots to test scalability. For more information on reuse, see key resources from the World Economic Forum's Consumers Beyond Waste Initiative: [Executive Summary](#), [City Playbook](#), [Design Guidelines](#), and [Safety Guidelines](#). Join the community transitioning to more reusable systems that work for the products you sell and the stakeholders you serve.



© Greg Armfield

- **Advocate for the changes needed to shift from a linear to a circular economy in the U.S. and globally and to tackle the issue of ghost gear** by promoting principles of extended producer responsibility, environmental justice, and international leadership to reimagine our linear economies, as outlined in [WWF's 5-Point Roadmap to Materials Circularity](#); by joining [OneSource Coalition](#); and by [supporting a UN treaty on plastic pollution](#).

WWF is fighting for a world with no plastic in nature by 2030. It's a world where our oceans teem with marine life, not discarded nets, bottles, and bags/cups; where no human breathes the toxic fumes of burning plastic; and where every indispensable plastic product is used to make another. We need all stakeholders to think differently, to innovate, and to provide solutions that not only make us better stewards of the resources we are taking from the planet but also make sure we keep them in the system so they can be used again and again.

Please contact Erin.Simon@wwfus.org and Jessica.Zeuner@wwfus.org with any questions.

Visit our program websites to learn more about how WWF is addressing the plastic pollution crisis:



© WWF / naturepl.com / Sergio Hanquet



- i "Breaking the Plastic Wave: A Comprehensive Assessment of Pathways Towards Stopping Ocean Plastic Pollution." The Pew Charitable Trusts and SYSTEMIQ, 2020. https://www.pewtrusts.org/-/media/assets/2020/10/breakingtheplasticwave_mainreport.pdf.
- ii "Impacts of plastic pollution in the oceans on marine species, biodiversity and ecosystems." World Wildlife Fund and the Alfred Wegener Institute, 2022. https://wwfint.awsassets.panda.org/downloads/wwf_impacts_of_plastic_pollution_on_biodiversity.pdf.
- iii Analysis conducted by WWF using data from UNEP, Trucost, and the Plastic Disclosure Project.
- iv "Stemming the Tide: Land-based strategies for a plastic-free ocean." Ocean Conservancy and McKinsey Center for Business and Environment, 2017. <https://oceanconservancy.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/full-report-stemming-the.pdf>.
- v "New report from WWF says abandoned fishing gear an 'immortal menace' which must be central in the fight against plastic pollution," World Wildlife Fund, 20 Oct 2020. https://wwf.panda.org/wwf_news/press_releases/?983716/New-report-from-WWF-says-abandoned-fishing-gear-an-immortal-menace-which-must-be-central-in-the-fight-against-plastic-pollution.