« The carrier bags and degradable debate »

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The ”white pollution”

Other arguments in the debate

- Climate
- Fossile fuels
- Poor recycling results
- Symbol: Consumption
- Reuse vs ”one- way”
- Floods and drainage
- Slow degradation
- Opportunities for other producers/ products, farmers, and for taxes

New trends – New wrapping

Case Norway

Proposed ban in 2008:

- Tax proposed in the 70´s; stopped
- Ban proposed in <u>March</u> 2008 by Minister of Environment!
- Ban stopped in <u>October</u>

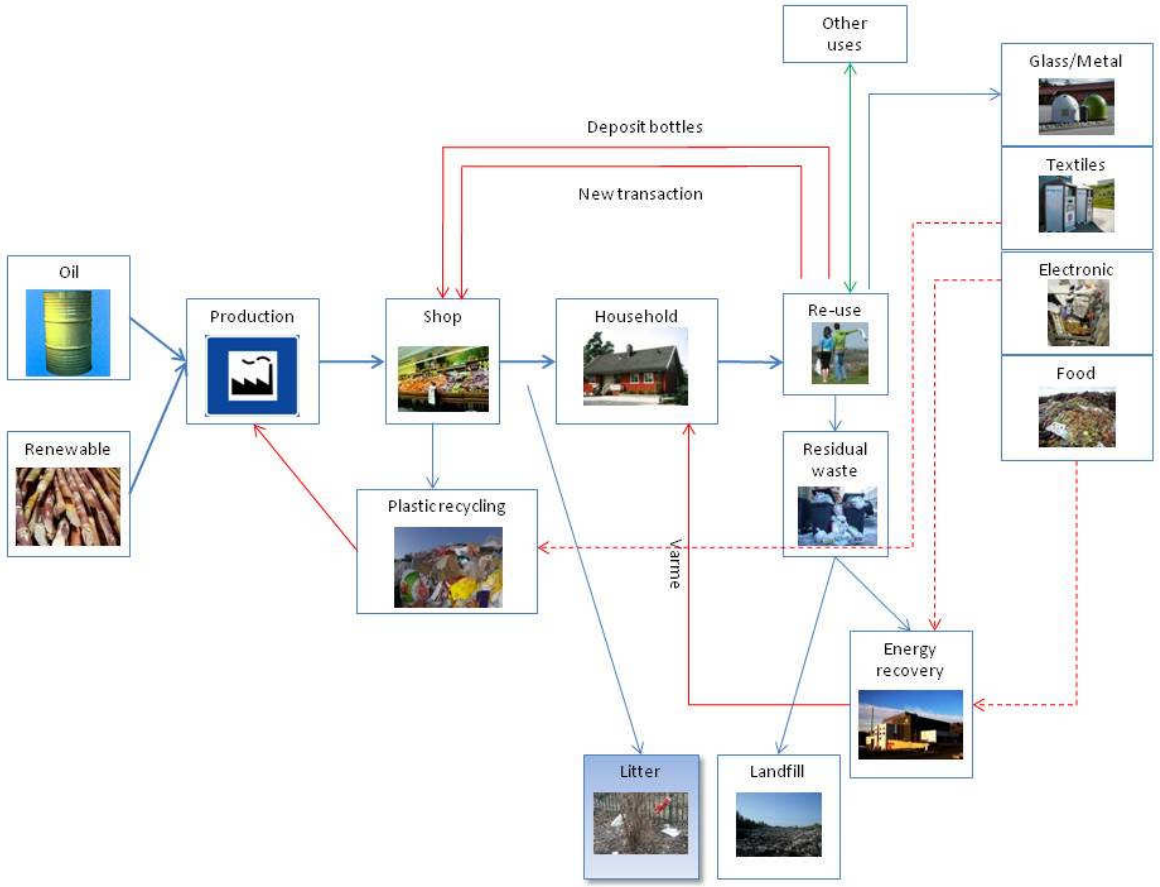
What happened in between?

- New plastic bags put on the market
  - Biodegradable bag
  - Oxo- degradable bag
  - Bag based on recycled material
- Promotion of reuse bags
- Local bans proposed by municipalities
- Tax proposed to protect paper mill in crisis
- …..EPA asked to make a study afterwards

What did industry do?
(= How to stop such a proposal)

1. Industry and reatail trade joined forces
2. Alliances, also with municipalities and EPA
3. Fact based study with holistic approach
4. Take problems seriously
5. Propose an action plan
6. Promoting alternatives, e.g. Reuse bags
7. Coordination +financing by Plastretur

A holistic approach



The report

1. Facts about the plastic carrier bag
2. Litter
3. Fundamental conditions
4. Alternative solutions
5. Lifecycle analyses
6. Other countries
7. "Sustainable use and recovery"
8. Action plan
9. Conclusions

Facts about plastic carrier bags

- 1 bn in Norway, may be 1000 bn globally
- 3 kg per capita/year (less than 1 % of waste)
- One bag: 1/ 1000 of the weight of the goods!
- 60 % used for residual waste
- 33 % used for deposit/ recycling systems
- 18 % recycled, 52 % energy, 29 % landfill
- Littering: less than 1 %

LCA: Some preliminary conclusions from Spanish study (2007):

1. Most significant environmental impact attributable to carrier bags is in the consumption of **raw materials** and the production process.
2. Environmental impacts in connection with **transpor**t are normally of little relevance
3. Environmental impact of the production process is offset to some extent by high levels of material **recycling** and energy recovery.
4. Reuse of bags and nets, including their use as rubbish bags, is an important consideration: The **number of times** a bag is reused can often be decisive.
5. Some types of bags create more of a **litter** problem than others

LCA (Carrefour study)

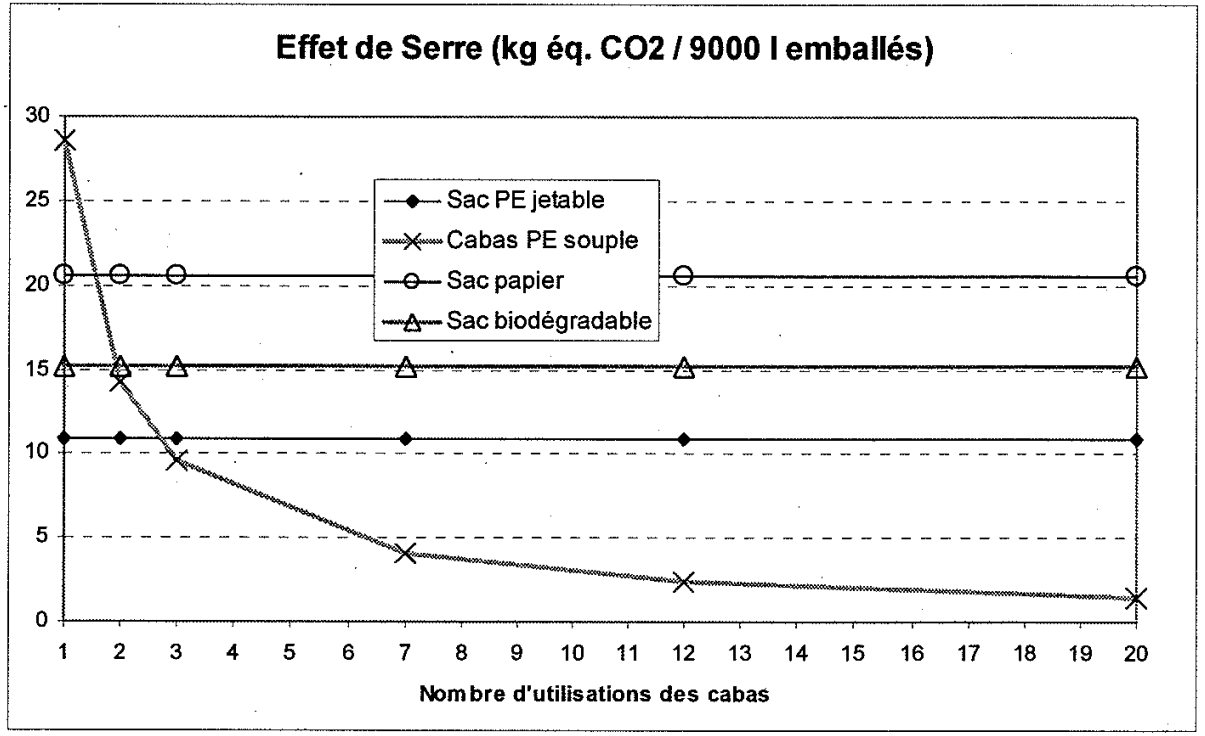


Figure 15 : Emissions de gaz à effet de serre pour les sacs étudiés

Norway vs other countries

1. **LDPE bags** which are suited to multiple use, not thin HDPE bags
2. Consumers **pay** for carrier bags. (Normally € 0,10, more for bio bags!)
3. Carrier bags are used to **wrap up** residual waste which is mostly utilized as energy.
4. Carrier bags are also used to wrap up the **various fractions** in an advanced sorting at source system, including a deposit-and-return system for all beverage packaging.
5. Bags are also welcome in **national take-back system** for all types of plastic packaging from households for recycling.
6. **Litter** problems differ from those in developing countries

Report: Arguments opposing a ban

1. Consumers should choose what is best for their shopping and waste handling etc
2. Integrated part of waste management solution
3. How serious are the environmental impacts?
4. How are the alternatives? (LCAs)
5. Does not reduce the litter problem much
6. Government should focus on bigger issues
7. Regulated as part of EU-directive
8. Risk of substitution by other plastic bags
9. Reuse bags are now promoted
10. Other measures might be more efficient

Action plan

- Reduce number of bags by 20% within 2010
- Promote reuse bags
- Improve the bags in use
- Developing actions related to littering
- Further studies on ”bio-plastics”
- Information on bags
- Web page

List of actions for improvement

1. Lighter / thinner bags/ “reduce”
2. More reuse
3. Use more recycled material
4. Recycle more bags
5. Renewable raw materials can be used, e.g. "Green PE"

Challenges for the system

- License fee on reuse bags?
- Collect and recycle reuse bags?
- License fee according to recyclability?
- Quality criteria for PELD film vs content of bioplastics, oxo and other additives?
- License fee for bags not included in the recycling schemes?

Our conclusions regarding proposed ban

1. A drastic measure in relation to environmental impact.
2. Illegal under the EU packaging directive.
3. The use of other types of bags with more negative environmental impacts might be stimulated.
4. Will/ can damage existing recycling systems for plastic packaging.
5. Loss of efficiency and flexibility in the distribution and use of bags used for sorting at source
6. Initiatives from industry is a better alternative to meet challenges

Conclusions for Europe and EPRO

1. We all have the same challenges and we should learn from each others experiences
2. We have to expect new debates and initiatives, new materials and products on our long way to the sustainable, ”renewable” resource based recycling society!

Thank you!

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Topic coming up next:
plastics from fisheries