

MOTION

ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT

It is generally accepted that the use of plastics has transformed daily life immensely. The touted benefits of plastics include its durability over a long period of time along with low production costs. These supposed benefits allowed it to seep into most of the packaging of products we use or consume today. However, plastics' long-lasting durability has turned into a sustainability curse because it can take from 20 to 500 years for most common plastics to biodegrade naturally. A plastic water bottle purchased ten years ago and tossed away could sit in a landfill for generations before it is absorbed into the ecosystem. There are millions of tons of plastic produced for the packaging of products that have very short utilization periods. The public is making purchasing choices without an understanding of hidden long-term costs to the environment and of how its purchasing power can influence future use of certain materials. Packaging biodegradability information is missing from the general conversation, which hinders efforts to promote a sustainable lifestyle that reduces the amount of refuse with long-term environmental impact periods.

A key strategy to fully implement our Sustainable LA goals is to make sure the public is fully informed before they make consumer purchases. A crucial piece of information that could spur keeping sustainability front and center in our day-to-day lives is to know how long the packaging used to contain our food and products lasts after we consume the product. The City should consider requiring that all packaging comes with a lifecycle or biodegradable label-date that indicates how long a wrapper, container, or filler material will take before it naturally biodegrades in the environment.

There are some grocery chains already considering how to reduce the use of plastics in some of their products by changing to alternative and sustainable packaging, or even eliminating the plastic wrapping and selling products loose as an a la carte service. It would help the City improve its sustainability policies if the Bureau of Sanitation along with the City Attorney reported on the feasibility of requiring that packaging is labeled with the date of its lifecycle or a biodegradable date in the form of a sticker or printed label.

I THEREFORE MOVE that the Bureau of Sanitation be instructed and the City Attorney be requested to report on the feasibility of requiring that product and food packaging include a visible lifecycle/biodegradable indicator to better inform the public of the decomposition time-period in landfills for packaging materials used in consumer purchases.

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