

## Acción Ecológica

### Toxics-Free Sustainable Development Goals

#### Project: COVID-19 Industry Rollbacks

#### Prohibition of single-use plastics and Roll Back of Morelos Waste Law

##### 1. *Facts about the country pandemic situation*

In Mexico to date, 173,000 deaths from COVID have been recorded, with most of the time at a red light (the strictest tier) in several states. In the case of the state of Morelos, which is where the campaign was carried out, the situation has been critical, since due to its high population density and the geographic location of proximity to Mexico City, the number of cases has been approximately 24,000. We are currently at a red light and hospital saturation is beginning to occur.

##### 2. *Impacts from rollbacks*

In January 2020, the ban on single-use plastics went into effect<sup>1</sup>. The Local Congress established a period of 90 days for the elaboration of the waste regulation. The elaboration of the waste regulation is the responsibility of the Secretary of Sustainable Development of Morelos. The regulations must establish the specific rules to comply with the prohibition, which includes the obligation for commercial establishments to submit to the environmental authority a single-use plastics substitution program.

However, the local authorities of the Sustainable Development Secretariat of Morelos intend to publish a waste regulation, with exceptions to the prohibition for hygiene and safety reasons, which would leave the door open for large companies to continue giving these plastics to consumers, invalidating the ban.

A representative of the recycling industry participated in the development of the regulation. She was the one who led the Waste Committee in the State Advisory Council for Sustainable Development, a space in which she participates as a representative of the Mexican Network for Environmental Waste Management (REMEXMAR), and has defended proposals such as incineration and points of view close to the plastics industry.

The waste regulation has not been published, and we continue to insist on a comprehensive review for the elimination of exemptions.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://periodico.morelos.gob.mx/obtenerPDF/2020/5773.pdf>

### 3. *Policy recommendations to deal with the findings in the report*

1. Eliminate the exceptions to the prohibition of single-use plastics from the waste regulations.
2. Comprehensive review of the waste regulations to promote waste reduction and recycling.
3. Establish clear rules and incentives for shopping centers to comply with the prohibition, as well as inform them about the alternatives.
4. Make agreements with the University to research compostable materials.

### Project Outcomes:

#### 4. *Description of the activity conducted*

The activities within the project contemplated a deep legal analysis of the prohibition of single-use plastics in various entities and cities of the country, to contrast with the reform of the Morelos Waste Law published in January 2020. Once the legal analyzes was done, virtual meetings were held with key actors from academia, civil society organizations, groups of young environmentalists, government authorities, and staff from supermarkets, small shops, and markets.

In this work, a very interesting finding was the identification of a key actor that had not been taken into account in the advocacy work. We refer to the union of grouped merchants who have been very interested in complying with the prohibition of granting single-use plastics; however, fear prevails, because there is no full understanding of the scope of the reform that came into force on January 18, 2021.

Added to this, the merchants have had unfortunate approaches with municipal governments, who threaten to fine them, without a prior awareness campaign, thereby increasing the risk that the ban may be used for acts of corruption by the authority. From our point of view, this would be detrimental to the social acceptance of the protective and progressive spirit of the reform of the law. We also detect that they lack information on low-cost alternatives in the market to substitute these materials.

Another of the social groups with whom we had contact was the group of young environmentalists "11 y nos Vamos." With them a brand audit was carried out in three of the main ravines of Cuernavaca and Temixco, to obtain information on which products were being discarded during the pandemic.

This activity was documented photographically and the information was made public with the media, highlighting the danger of plastics, and calling on the state government to eliminate the exceptions to the prohibition of single-use plastics from the Regulation, and a working group has been established for it.

A discussion was also organized with academics and civil society organizations to discuss the danger of the increase<sup>2</sup> in the generation of single-use plastics in the midst of the pandemic, and the importance of eliminating exceptions to the prohibition in the regulations of the law. The increase in disposable plastics during the pandemic was documented by Dr. Nancy Merary Jiménez from UNAM<sup>3</sup>, a speaker at the discussion organized within the framework of the project<sup>4</sup>.

Within the framework of the entry into force of the ban on single-use plastics, two infographics, and a digital brochure was launched on the Facebook pages of Acción Ecológica, Citizen Observatory of Air Quality, and the Plastic Collective No Thanks.

We had intense work with the media to insist on the importance of a working group with the state government, eliminate the exceptions, and publish the regulations. As a result of media pressure and the alliance with the Chambers of Commerce and other actors; the state government agreed to install a working group, to analyze the latest version of the regulation. Our goal is to remove exceptions to the ban.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://energiahoy.com/2020/12/23/industria-del-plastico-en-mexico-crecio-3-gracias-a-covid-19/>  
<https://www.jornada.com.mx/notas/2020/12/22/economia/demanda-de-plasticos-en-mexico-ha-crecido-por-covid-19/>

[https://www.dgcs.unam.mx/boletin/bdboletin/2021\\_080.html](https://www.dgcs.unam.mx/boletin/bdboletin/2021_080.html)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.proceso.com.mx/nacional/2021/2/1/entorno-ecologico-tambien-es-devastado-por-el-covid-19-investigadora-de-la-unam-257397.html>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9MyyIW9f980>