

Woolworths to trial recycled paper shopping bags

Woolworths is trialling bags made out of 100% recycled paper for fashion, beauty and homeware purchases at its Blue Route store in Cape Town.



The retailer says that in alignment with its Good Business Journey, every aspect of the impact of the new paper bags has been considered, from improved care for the environment, utilising recycled content, to sourcing the bag from a local medium-sized black-owned enterprise.

The paper used in their production is recovered from used cardboard and boxes from the mill where Woolworths sends its cardboard waste, resulting in a 'closed loop recycling' paper shopping bag in line with circular economy principles. The design process has included durability to ensure the bags can handle the weights and sizes of different fashion, beauty and homeware items.



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28 Aug 2019



From the consumer perspective, the bags may be re-used for ongoing fashion, beauty and homeware purchases, but will be unsuitable for food purchases as paper bags simply can't stand up to the inevitable moisture of cold chains items. The new paper bags will also be fully recyclable, making it easy for Woolies' customers to dispose of the bags responsibly and ensure they don't go ultimately to landfill.

"The Woolworths paper bag has been designed as a true win-win," says Feroz Koor: Woolworths Holdings group head of sustainability. "We are looking forward to getting the trial underway so that we can gauge customer reactions and put the necessary logistics into action. We currently give out 30 million single-use plastic bags a year for the purchases of fashion, beauty and homeware products, so it's going to be a big step towards our [zero waste to landfill 2022](#) commitment to remove this from our waste streams."

The trial of the paper bags at Woolworths Blue Route in Cape Town, which is a large full-line store, offers the opportunity to assess all three sizes of the new bag. In addition, the store is based in Tokai within easy reach of Woolies Head Office which makes monitoring the trial and addressing any concerns more efficient.



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24 Apr 2019



Transformation challenges

The retailer notes that transformation from single-use plastic to paper bags is not as simple as one may think. There are several critical logistical challenges that have to be met.

The paper bags are bulkier and they take up seven times more space than their plastic counterparts. This has numerous implications for delivery, storage both at the store and at till points; ordering and replenishing processes. Time needs to be taken for store staff to gain experience in packing the different bags in the best possible ways, and customer responses need to be researched and understood.

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