

#breakfreefromplastic

To: Kevin Johnson, CEO
Starbucks Coffee Company
2401 Utah Avenue South, Suite 800
Seattle, WA 98134 USA

Dear Mr. Johnson:

We understand that Starbucks is trying to listen to its customers' demands for less plastic. But is the new strawless coffee cup lid *actually* going to be recycled?

The recent announcement by Starbucks to eliminate straws franchise-wide and replace them with the new design might seem to be a step forward in the fight against plastic pollution, at first glance.

But here's the concern: **The new lid actually utilizes more plastic than the previous lid and straw design combination.** The current lid and straw design contains 3.55 grams of plastic while the new design contains 4.11 grams of plastic¹. #breakfreefromplastic, the global movement working to stop plastic pollution for good, advocates for better alternatives that utilize less plastic. Plastic production is ramping at an alarming rate. It's not just a management problem, it's an unmanageable problem.

Straws are not the only problem in terms of the Starbucks overall plastic footprint. Although straws were targeted by advocates after a 2015 video of a straw lodged in a sea turtle's nose went viral, by weight, **straws only account for a mere 0.02%** of plastic pollution².

Starbucks Director of Packaging and Sourcing, Chris Milne stated on The Starbucks Website, "By nature, the straw isn't recyclable and the lid is, so we feel this decision is more sustainable and more socially responsible." However, the replacement for straws, a design made of #5 polypropylene, is highly unlikely to be recycled at any meaningful rate.

Waste Management, the largest waste company in America, announced just this week that they would no longer be accepting #5 plastic in curbside recycling programs in Sacramento, California³, and more and more cities⁴ and towns⁵ are sending #5 plastics straight to the landfill

¹ <https://reason.com/blog/2018/07/12/starbucks-straw-ban-will-see-the-company>

² <https://phys.org/news/2018-04-science-amount-straws-plastic-pollution.html>

³ <https://www.sacbee.com/news/local/article214595840.html>

⁴ <https://www.opb.org/news/article/recycling-landfills-oregon-washington-china-video/>

⁵ <https://www.azcentral.com/story/news/local/arizona/2018/07/04/some-things-you-recycle-get-sent-landfill-s-arizona-cities-china-ban-phoenix-flagstaff-tempe/752442002/>

#breakfreefromplastic

all over The United States.⁶ As such, claims about the ability of #5 plastics to be ‘widely recycled’ is improbable. In fact, only 9% of the world’s recycling actually gets recycled⁷. Furthermore, with more than 24,000 stores across more than 25 markets⁸, half of Starbucks stores are located outside the United States and Europe, and far less likely to have any access to recycling. These cities are already struggling to fund waste collection systems yet they are left to address waste that communities can neither compost or recycle.

The #breakfreefromplastic movement, which consists of nearly 1,300 NGO’s around the world, is comprised of experts with scaleable, systemic and transformative solutions needed at every stage of the plastic pollution life cycle, from extraction to disposal. A number of the core groups in the movement are on the front lines of this crisis, including demanding zero-waste cities to transform the way we make, use and dispose, single-use plastic.

We invite you to visit with members of #breakfreefromplastic in Southeast Asia to witness first-hand where plastic has been introduced by global north companies to markets that are not designed to digest it. We invite you to experience the innovative work of member organizations working tirelessly to create a future where zero-waste, plastic pollution free cities are the norm. In many of the countries in Southeast Asia-- home to countless Starbucks franchises-- recycling capacity is virtually non existent and Starbucks waste is ending up in landfills and dumpsites, or ultimately making its way into waterways and the ocean. Members of #breakfreefromplastic have found Starbucks branded straws, hot cups, cold cups, and lids during beach cleanups where we audit the types of products and packaging we find.

While recycling should be pursued and recognized, we cannot recycle our way out of the plastic pollution problem. **We are calling on Starbucks to reduce the amount of plastic in their products and eliminate problematic packaging.** Furthermore, we invite Starbucks to discuss innovative solutions with #breakfreefromplastic members working on better alternatives. We believe Starbucks can be a leader by demonstrating accountability for the recovery of materials beyond the retail counter and promoting reusability.

#breakfreefromplastic is a global movement envisioning a future free from plastic pollution. Since its launch in September 2016, nearly 1,300 groups from across the world have joined the movement to demand massive reductions in single-use plastics and to push for lasting solutions

⁶<https://www.wastedive.com/news/what-chinese-import-policies-mean-for-all-50-states/510751/>

⁷<https://news.nationalgeographic.com/2017/07/plastic-produced-recycling-waste-ocean-trash-debris-environment/>

⁸ <https://www.starbucks.com/business/international-stores>

#breakfreefromplastic

to the plastic pollution crisis. These organizations share the common values of environmental protection and social justice, which guide their work at the community level and represent a global, unified vision. www.breakfreefromplastic.org.

Sincerely,

The Story of Stuff Project

Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives

Trash Hero World

Zero Waste Europe

Centre for Zero Waste & Development in Africa

Californians Against Waste

BaliFokus/Nexus3 Foundation

DRAKENSTEIN ENVIRONMENTAL WATCH (DEW)

Don't Waste Arizona

Ecology Center

No Waste Louisiana

Downwinders at Risk

Texas Campaign for the Environment

Zero Zbel Morocco

UPSTREAM

Society for Earth, Poland

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Save Our Shores

Hazards Centre

Oceana

Wild at Heart Legal Defense Association, Taiwan

Consumers' Association of Penang

Ecowaste Coalition , Philippines

Environment and Social Development Organization-ESDO

Gita Pertiwi

Indonesia Water Community of Practice

NCR Waste Matters

PLAN: The Post-Landfill Action Network

Gerakan Indonesia Diet Kantong Plastik

Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) Youth - Indonesia

Pacific Environment

Team Marine

YPBB Bandung

Sahabat Alam Malaysia (Friends of the Earth Malaysia)

Greeners Action, Hong Kong

CAG, Chennai, India

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Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL)

Seventh Generation Advisors

Greenpeace

5 Gyres

Wishtoyo Chumash Foundation

Centre de Recherche et d'Education pour le Développement (CREPD)

ZERO - Associação Sistema Terrestre Sustentável

Voice of Irish Concern for the Environment and the Conscious Cup Campaign

Center for International Environmental Law - US

Pipeline Safety Coalition

European Environmental Bureau

The Last Plastic Straw

Mother Earth Foundation Philippines

Plastic Pollution Coalition

Plastic Free Seas

Earthworks

Korea Zero Waste Movement Network

Environmental Investigation Agency

Plastic Soup Foundation

Zero Waste France