

REPORT

Monitoring the Plastics Pact NL

Doing more with less plastic

Results in 2019

Executive summary

This is the 2019 monitoring report on the Plastics Pact NL. It is noteworthy that the response rate has risen from the baseline measurement of 42% in 2017/2018 to 88%. This is a positive and crucial development, because without an adequate response it is impossible to obtain a clear picture of current trends and the extent to which the main objectives of the Plastics Pact NL are being achieved. One of the reasons for this increase is the simplification of the request for data on 2019. It was not yet possible for all parties to provide all the data requested. It is not yet clear whether some parties simply failed to supply the requested data or whether they cannot reasonably be expected to have access to the data, given the nature of their activities. This will be further explored in the coming year, as improving reporting is just as important as improving the response.

The data received makes it possible to report on the initial trends and the progress made on the main objectives. However, we do this with some reservation, since the amount of data is limited and the business activities of the parties supplying the data vary widely. It is therefore important to further enhance the quality and reliability of the monitoring process in the years ahead.

The main results are shown below.



Figuur 1. Voortgang op de hoofddoelstellingen in 2019

Translation of above figure

Objective 1: 100% recyclable plastic
44% 62% 100%
2017 baseline 2025 target

Objective 2: 20% less plastic placed on the market
0% 2.5% 20%
2017 baseline 2025 target

Objective 3: 70% of plastic waste is recycled
49% 53% 70%
2017 baseline 2025 target

Objective 4: Use 35% recycled plastics and biobased plastics
11% 25% 35%
2017 baseline 2025 target

Figure 1. Progress on the main objectives in 2019

Methodology

The higher response also makes it possible to provide more insight into the spread of results among the various parties. The general conclusion is that the spread (the differences among the parties) is large: for many indicators it covers the entire spectrum of possible outcomes. When considering the spread in results, it should be borne in mind that the type of party affects the feasibility of an objective.

To quantify progress towards the main objectives, the weighted and unweighted average was calculated. It is important to note that not all parties provided data for all years. This means that if more parties supply data, the weighted and unweighted average is recalculated every year on the basis of a different composition of parties (both parties joining the Plastics Pact NL and parties leaving it affect the reported averages). Main objective 2 is the only one to which this does not apply: this indicator can only be calculated for parties that supplied data for both 2017/2018 and 2019. The report also looks at the number of parties whose performance improves or deteriorates in relation to the objectives. For this purpose, only the parties that supplied data for all years (2017, 2018 and 2019) were considered.

Results for each main objective

The weighted average percentage of packaging that is recyclable (main objective 1) rose from 44% in 2017 to 62% in 2019, the target being 100%. As regards the 12 parties for which data is available for both years, for five of them the figure increased, for six of them it remained approximately constant, and for the other one it decreased.

With regard to reducing the use of plastic by 20% compared with the total volume of products placed on the market (main objective 2), the amount of plastic packaging material used fell by 2.5%. However, it is difficult to measure progress because relatively few parties supplied data for the 2017 baseline measurement. The qualitative data provided do, however, show that many parties are taking action to reduce the use of plastic. For four of the eight parties for which data is available for both years the amount of plastic used decreased, for two of them it increased and for the other two it remained constant.

As regards main objective 3 (at least 70% by weight of all single-use plastic products and packaging disposed of in the Netherlands must undergo high-quality recycling), we see an alternating pattern. In 2017, the weighted average for the four parties that provided data was 66%. In 2018, this weighted average first fell to 49% (based on five parties) in 2018 and then increased again, to 53% (nine parties).

Main objective 4 states that by 2025 all single-use plastic products and packaging marketed by plastics-using companies must contain the highest possible percentage of recycled plastics, the target being an average of at least 35% per company. The result for 2019 is based on data submitted by 23 parties. 25% of the total amount of packaging put on the market by these parties in that year consisted of recycled material. As regards the eight parties that reported on both 2017 and 2019, the percentage of recycled plastics used in new single-use packaging increased for five parties, decreased for one party and remained constant for the other two. It is not possible for all parties to meet this main objective.

The use of recyclate in food packaging (except PET) is not yet permitted. Chemical recyclate that can be used in food packaging first became available on the market in 2020, on a very small scale. The scope for using recyclate in food packaging is expected to increase in the years ahead, as chemical recycling capacity is scaled up.

In the case of non-food and transport packaging, there is far greater scope for using recycled materials. An action plan for recyclate applications and an action plan for biobased applications were therefore launched in early 2021, as part of the plastics transition agenda. The impact of these action plans will probably not be visible until the 2021 or 2022 monitoring report.

Qualitative findings

The analysis of the qualitative results clearly shows that the actions and plans focus on product innovation. There is still a lot of work to be done in this regard to achieve the main objectives. There is no magic bullet, no single all-encompassing breakthrough, for achieving these objectives. In reality, innovations and changes are needed across the entire range of applications for packaging and single-use plastics.

As regards product innovation, we see many moves towards redesigning products by using other materials (including recyclate). This often requires changes not only to products but also to the associated manufacturing processes.

Data density and improvements for the monitoring round on 2020

Based on the data supplied, we determined the data density, i.e. the ratio between the data supplied and the total data required. For this purpose, only data that is required to report on the aforementioned main objectives and indicators was considered. For the plastics-using companies (47), the average data density is 44% (ranging from 7% to 92%). For the plastic producers, recyclers, sorters and collectors (17), the average data density is 66% (ranging from 20% to 100%). Note that a low density does not necessarily mean that a company has supplied incomplete data, since companies were not required to explain why no data had been entered for an indicator. A company may not know what the data is, but another possibility is that it simply cannot have access to such data, for example because it does not produce or employ single-use products. The parties were sent an additional request in an effort to obtain missing information on certain indicators. This clarified why some companies had not responded to certain questions, but this does not apply to most questions (and companies). For the next monitoring round, it is therefore important to ask the parties to provide an explanation if they do not supply all the data requested. This will provide valuable information on the progress being made and how the main objectives of the Plastics Pact NL are monitored. The report concludes with a number of concrete proposals for improving the next monitoring round on 2020.