

Concerning the Act on Promotion of Resource Circulation for Plastics

Plastic products

Photo: Purana/PIXTA

As part of Japan's "3R [Reduce, Reuse, Recycle] + Renewable" initiatives to promote resource circulation of plastics in each stage of the entire lifecycle of plastic products, in collaboration with all stakeholders including municipalities, businesses and consumers, the Act on Promotion of Resource Circulation for Plastics (hereinafter "the Act") was brought into effect on April 1, 2022.

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INTRODUCTION

Plastic is lightweight, durable, easy to mold, and non-corrodible, making it an indispensable material in society today. And its utility extends to a wide range of products, containers, and packaging.

At the same time, there is a growing need to promote domestic resource circulation of plastics as a way to deal with the issues of marine plastic litter, climate change, and enhanced import control of waste materials in other countries and so forth. The Act was brought into effect on April 1, 2022, to strengthen the comprehensive resource circulation system for plastics used in diverse ways. The Act focuses on plastic as a material used in a wide range of products and aims to promote resource circulation of plastics based on the "3R + Renewable" initiative by all stakeholders at every stage of its lifecycle, from product design to waste disposal. Towards the resource circulation of plastics in Japan, a number of initiatives are advancing while collaborating with all stakeholders including municipalities, businesses and consumers at each

stage of the lifecycle of plastics.

DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

Based on the Act, the government published "the Guideline for design of Plastic-containing Products" as a way to encourage designers and manufacturers of plastic-containing products to produce environmentally friendly design. The guideline prescribes using less plastic, reducing excessive packaging, designing products that are easy to disassemble and separate, and using recycled plastic and bio-based plastic. Moreover, the government has introduced a certification scheme to recognize excellent product designs. The government preferentially procures such certified products and requires consumers and businesses to use them.

SALES AND PROVISIONS

The Act is asking retailers and service providers who provide "specified plastic-containing products" to take action. "Specified plastic-containing products" refers to 12 plastic items in

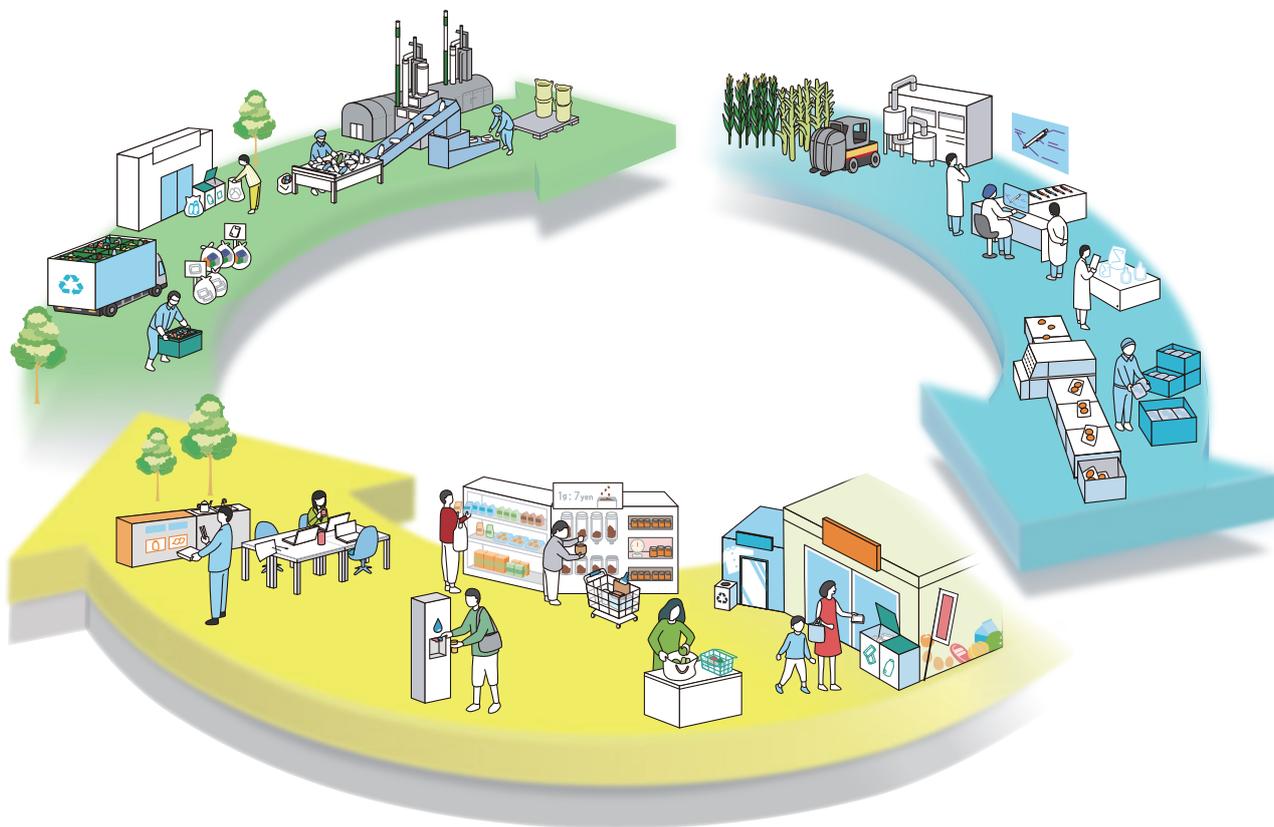


Illustration of plastic resource circulation

The Act is designed to promote “3R [Reduce, Reuse, Recycle] + Renewable” initiatives

total: forks, spoons, table knives, stir sticks, and straws provided by retailers, restaurants, and so forth; hairbrushes, combs, razors, toothbrushes, and shower caps provided by accommodations; and hangers and clothing covers provided by laundry services and so forth. Retailers and service providers who provide specified plastic products are required to implement any initiatives to reduce the amount of waste of these items. In detail, businesses that are subject to this provision are required to offer any initiatives concerning “how to offer,” such as asking consumers’ wishes on whether or not to use the products, giving them point rewards for not receiving the products, and charging for their use; and “what to offer,” such as offering items made from alternative materials.

DISCHARGE, COLLECTION, AND RECYCLING

Three measures are defined for the “discharge, collection, and recycling” stage. The first is related to sorted collection and recycling activities by municipalities. In Japan, most municipalities have been sorting, collecting, and recycling used PET bottles and other plastic packaging waste as a resource, with the help of residents, under the existing Act on the Promotion of Sorted Collection and Recycling of Containers and Packaging. The new Act requires municipalities to sort, collect, and recycle not only plastic containers and packaging waste but also other plastic products waste.

The second is to make it easier for businesses such as manufacturers, retailers and others to collect and recycle plastic products.

The third is to require businesses to reduce the amount

of plastic waste generation and to recycle plastic. Moreover, the Act introduces measures to facilitate recycling by such businesses.

CONCLUSION

Based on the Act, Japan will continue to work to create the conditions for more sophisticated circulation of plastics and for the transition to a circular economy by promoting resource circulation efforts based on “3R + Renewable” initiatives by all entities throughout the lifecycle of plastic products. [7](#)

Note: This article has been created using official published materials.

Plastic containers

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