



IK Industrievereinigung  
Kunststoffverpackungen e.V.

## Green eco populism against plastic carrier bags

Bad Homburg, December 5th, 2011 – So far, the German Green Party has always emphasized its credibility with regards to environmental problems. This has now changed. The Green demand for a ban of plastic carrier bags at the federal delegate conference clearly shows signs of eco populism.

As a threadbare argument for a ban of carrier bags in Germany, the pollution of the sea is being used. Has the Green Party actually missed the fact that for over 20 years great success has been made in the area of disposal and recycling of plastic carrier bags within the framework of the packaging directive? By now, the recycling quota of plastics packaging has reached 97%. As a consequence, there are no littering problems with plastic carrier bags in Germany, nor do they end up in the sea in large quantities. This statement by the Green Party is simply wrong.

In addition, it is implied that citizens simply throw everything away. The opposite is the case. Over 90 percent of consumers collect packaging in the Yellow Bag. Equally untrue is the Green statement that carrier bags from renewable resources that decompose in the environment already exist. A plastic material that decomposes by itself within a short period of time is currently not available. Rather, these so called biodegradable carrier bags are sorted out in German composting plants, as their decomposition is taking too long. In addition, they are not suitable for the recycling process.

In this context, the Green Party would be well advised to listen to factual arguments and not to build up an ideological enemy stereotype.

Furthermore, conventional plastic carrier bags also score well within the field of sustainability and the saving of resources. They consist of the plastic material polyethylene, which is made mostly from crude oil. Statistically, a German

### Presse-Kontakt:

Ulf Kelterborn  
Hauptgeschäftsführer  
Heike Richter  
Kommunikation

IK Industrievereinigung  
Kunststoffverpackungen e.V.

Bundesverband für  
Kunststoffverpackungen und Folien

Kaiser-Friedrich-Promenade 43  
61348 Bad Homburg v.d.H.

Tel. (0 61 72) 92 66-79/-68  
Fax (0 61 72) 92 66-69

[www.kunststoffverpackungen.de](http://www.kunststoffverpackungen.de)  
u.kelterborn@  
kunststoffverpackungen.de  
h.richter@  
kunststoffverpackungen.de



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citizen uses 65 plastic carrier bags annually, weighing an average of 15 grams each. In total, this amounts to a total of 975 grams of polyethylene, manufactured from nearly the same amount of oil. This is about as much oil used for the manufacturing of just 1 litre of petrol. With an average fuel consumption of 7.5 litres per 100 kilometers this corresponds to a driven distance of 15 kilometers.

This example also makes clear that the use of plastic carrier bags in Germany has minor effects on the environment, also in comparison with other packaging materials. The Green Party's demand to introduce a so called environmental duty of 22 cent for plastic carrier bags in order to promote alternative packaging materials therefore is equally not justified.

From the point of view of the IK, the robust and moisture resistant carrier bag made from polyethylene should be used several times. The IK therefore supports a clear labeling of the carrier bags to encourage consumers to use the bag several times.

With more than 300 member companies the German association of plastics packaging, IK Industrievereinigung Kunststoffverpackungen e. V., is currently the largest association within the plastics industry in Europe.

IK is a supporting member of the GKV e. V. and is therefore engaged for the interests of the whole plastics processing industry in Germany.

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