

Public Forum for the Formulation of a Comprehensive Plastic Reduction Plan

- Disclosure of the government's draft comprehensive plan covering the entire life cycle, from source reduction to production, collection, and recycling
- Broad listening to the views of industry, academia, research institutions, and the public through a national public forum

The Ministry of Climate, Energy and Environment (MCEE, Minister Kim Sungwhan) announced that it will hold a “Public Forum on a Comprehensive Plastic Reduction Plan” at the Grand Conference Room of the National Assembly Members’ Office Building on the afternoon of December 23 to develop a blue print for the new administration’s plastic reduction policy.

Plastics are lightweight and highly versatile, making them widely used across industries. However, excessive growth in plastic waste*, increased use of short-lived products such as single-use items and packaging, and environmental persistence have emerged as global environmental issues.

* (Global plastic waste generation) 150 million tons in 2000 → 350 million tons in 2019
→ 1.01 billion tons projected for 2060 (OECD, 2022)

Accordingly, major countries such as the European Union (EU) are successively introducing measures including sustainable product design requirements (the Ecodesign Regulation) and mandatory use of recycled materials.

“The formulation of a comprehensive plastic reduction plan” is one of the Lee

Jae-myung administration's key policy priorities aimed at building a sustainable plastic circular economy ecosystem and securing industrial competitiveness in the international market.

At the public forum, the MCEE will unveil the government's draft comprehensive plastic reduction plan, which it has prepared through task-specific meetings and site visits, as well as stakeholder forums by sector (December 11–12), and participants from across society, including industry, academia, civil society, and the general public, will gather to engage in broad-ranging discussions.

The “comprehensive plastic reduction plan” will comprehensively encompass measures across all areas, from fundamentally reducing the use of virgin plastic to sustainable design and production, expanded collection and recycling, and strengthening the industrial competitiveness of the circular economy, under the goal of reducing household and business plastic waste by at least 30%* from projected levels by 2030.

* (Projections) 7.71 million tons in 2023 → 10.12 million tons in 2030 / (Target) By 2030, achieve 7 million tons of virgin plastic-based waste through source reduction (1 million tons) and the use of recycled materials (2 million tons)

In particular, to curb the continued rise in plastic waste, the government plans to introduce policies such as the gradual normalization of waste charges and a “(tentative) separate cup pricing system (cup price disclosure),” which would require receipts to itemize the cost of disposable cups in beverage purchases, thereby internalizing the environmental costs of fossil fuel extraction, such as petroleum, into product prices.

In addition, single-use items such as cups and containers in funeral halls, delivery containers, and parcel packaging, in principle, will be reduced and gradually replaced with reusable services.

In addition, policies will also be discussed to ensure sustainability from the design stage by introducing eco-friendly design requirements (ecodesign) and to reduce microplastics, the final endpoint of plastics, by gradually expanding bans on their use.

The comprehensive plastic reduction plan unveiled that day is particularly significant in that it was formulated for the first time based on a detailed material flow analysis* covering the entire life cycle of plastics, from raw materials to disposal, allowing goals and implementation tasks to be carefully derived on the basis of scientific data.

* Quantifying the flows of specific materials such as plastics, including their sources of generation, pathways of use, discharge and disposal, and final treatment

The entire public forum will be livestreamed starting at 2:00 p.m. on December 23 via the MCEE LIVE YouTube channel (<http://www.youtube.com/@mceenewsroom>), allowing anyone to watch in real time. Anyone participating in the public forum may submit their views and suggestions on the plastic policy of the government through the pre-registration page (<https://naver.me/59U0Gkk7>).

The MCEE plans to compile the views collected at the public forum to prepare the final version of the comprehensive plastic reduction plan, and to finalize and announce it in early next year after gathering input from relevant industries and other stakeholders and consulting with related ministries.

Minister Kim Sungwhan stated, “Plastics are so closely intertwined with our daily lives, so the plastic reduction policy can only be completed when the candid opinions and innovative ideas of all citizens come together.” He added, “Based on a comprehensive plastic reduction plan created together with the public, we will elevate Korea into a leading nation of a sustainable, circular green civilization.