

Revisit Plastic Packaging Policies

Whereas: Often environmentalism-themed pressure groups – masquerading as objective researchers – demonize products that for the most part safely meet essential needs, save money, and improve and protect lives.

Such is the case with plastic packaging and goods.

In recent years activist shareholders have sponsored proposals at various companies that urge them to address an alleged “plastics pollution crisis,”¹ which is primarily blamed on “single-use plastics” (SUPs), whose production is generated from the even more demonized “fossil fuels.”

Evidence shows these claims are exaggerated, distorted, or false.

Anti-SUP shareholder proponents cite two reports as the primary sources for their policy positions: *Breaking the Plastic Wave*,² published by the Pew Charitable Trusts, and *Plastics: The Costs to Society, the Environment, and the Economy*,³ by WWF. Discerning observers can see in these biased reports’ titles that these “studies” intend to drive readers to the authors’ desired conclusions.

Intellectually objective and honest research would not only highlight the “costs” (real or projected) and negative consequences (real or projected) of SUP use, but also would consider the economic and environmental *benefits* from their use, as well as examine both costs and benefits to viable alternatives for SUPs. The agenda-driven Pew and WWF reports do neither.

The benefits of SUPs, unexamined by Pew and WWF, are numerous – for example:

- Studies of disposable and reusable utensils show that “single service articles are microbiologically safer than reusables,” and “the probability of microbial contamination was found to be 50% greater with the reusables than with disposable items”⁴
- The American Chemistry Council states that “Plastics help us protect the environment by reducing waste, lowering greenhouse gas emissions, and saving energy.”⁵

An SUP-caused pollution “crisis” is a myth. For example, the “Great Pacific Garbage Patch” does not primarily consist of SUPs, but rather 52 percent consists of fishing nets, lines and ropes. SUPs represent a tiny fraction of the problem.⁶

Plastic pollution is primarily the result of poor disposal practices, not production.⁷

¹ <https://www.chevron.com/-/media/shared-media/documents/chevron-proxy-statement-2024.pdf> (p. 114)

² https://www.pewtrusts.org/-/media/assets/2020/07/breakingtheplasticwave_report.pdf

³ https://wwfint.awsassets.panda.org/downloads/wwf_pctsee_report_english.pdf

⁴ <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44541332?seq=1>

⁵ <https://www.americanchemistry.com/chemistry-in-america/chemistry-in-everyday-products/plastics>

⁶ <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-018-22939-w#MOESM1>

⁷ https://oursharedseas.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Jambeck_et_al_Plastic-waste-inputs-from-land-1.pdf

Supporting Statement: Colgate-Palmolive Company (“Company”) misleads investors in its steps to “eliminate plastic waste.” As just one example of many, it packages toothpaste in a “recyclable tube,”⁸ yet nearly all local jurisdictions and private contractors do not accept them in their recycling programs – the vast majority are sent to landfills.⁹

Other misleading claims regarding plastics abound.¹⁰ Production and packaging policies should follow the most efficient and economical practices possible, protecting the public health and environment under objectively truthful and metrically proven standards, while maximizing benefits for shareholders.

Resolved: Shareholders request the Board to (re-)examine its plastic production and packaging policies in light of non-biased, objectively verifiable, scientifically accurate, and economically thorough research. It would be best if a quantifiable assessment of fact-based potential policy changes versus current practices, as it affects the Company’s financial position, be included, with a report of its findings published – at reasonable cost and omitting proprietary information – by March 31, 2026.

⁸ <https://www.colgatepalmolive.com/content/dam/cp-sites/corporate/corporate/common/pdf/sustainability/colgate-palmolive-sustainability-and-social-impact-final-report-2023.pdf#page=8>

⁹ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-solutions/2023/09/14/colgate-toms-toothpaste-tube-recycling/>

¹⁰ <https://www.colgatepalmolive.com/en-us/who-we-are/stories/plastic-commitments>