



A Christmas without Styrofoam

The festive season is here and many persons are busy shopping, cleaning and disposing of many unwanted products as is characteristic of this time of the year. No doubt you will agree that the much needed cleanup exercises in and around the city is making a difference and may be hoping that the drive will reach your location soon. As we strive for a clean and green Guyana, we must take responsibility – we all have a role to play.



Let this Christmas season be one during which you begin the transformation of your surroundings to a clean and green space – do not wait on the local and municipal authorities – just go ahead and begin to clear your drains, plant flowers, weed bushes etc. – you know you can!

Get on board with the current campaign to switch from Styrofoam to reusable plates, bowls, food boxes (crocery) and plastic spoons, knives and forks (cutlery) to the biodegradable alternatives for alternatives now available at several supermarkets.

Importers and businesses are also encouraged to start switching to alternatives, since the importation of Styrofoam products for use in the food industry will be banned after January 01, 2016; Styrofoam use for this purpose will eventually be phased out. Styrofoam's usage in the food service industry is

pervasive being used for take away lunches, beverages, and also for parties, weddings and other functions. Imagine a Christmas without Styrofoam! Yes, it be beautiful, cleaner and greener outside!

The EPA, encourages the general public to refrain from the use of Styrofoam during this holiday season and be ready for the ban on Styrofoam products in the food service industry next year. Recognizing that change is not easy, you must gradually reduce your use of Styrofoam!

What can you do?

- ✚ While doing your Christmas shopping avoid purchasing Styrofoam products whether it be for a family gathering, a party or for storing things at home. Go for alternatives instead or more elegant table ware.
- ✚ When hosting parties, serve food in utensils that are not made of Styrofoam. Utilise reusable crockery and cutlery instead of disposable ones.
- ✚ Dispose of unwanted containers or products properly since non-biodegradable products such as Styrofoam take years to break down and are bad for the environment and human health.
- ✚ Some Christmas decorations are made of foam so before purchasing something because it is nice to think twice and remember the environment. Purchase decorations that can last a number of years or that aren't made from foam.
- ✚ Importers are encouraged to begin to switch to alternatives such as biodegradable products instead of trying to stock up on Styrofoam since the demand will diminish and it would be bad for your economics.

See this as an opportunity instead of a problem

Here are a few suggestions of products that can be used instead of Styrofoam containers.

✚ Cornstarch

Corn or potato starch is used to make a product that looks and holds up very similar to plastic. The starch replaces the petroleum used in standard plastic products. This enables the product to biodegrade in approximately six months. Corn and potato starch products include to-go containers and cups.



✚ Bagasse

Bagasse (by-product of sugarcane) is becoming a widespread alternative for Styrofoam as disposable tableware. One of the attractive qualities is that it's eco-friendly and compostable. Bagasse disposable tableware including plates and food containers can be lined with a corn-starch based film called PLA (Polylactic acid). PLA lining is a clear, thin sheet that acts as a complete moisture and grease barrier, protecting the container and allowing it to stand up against any and all types of food.

✚ Sugarcane

Plant fibers, such as those derived from sugar cane, can be used to make alternatives to Styrofoam. Sugar cane products include bowls, plates and to-go containers. These products are sustainable and environmentally friendly, as they can be fully composted. They can be used to serve both hot and cold foods.

✚ Reusable containers

A very simple alternative to Styrofoam that has been around for years is reusable containers. Instead of using Styrofoam cups, plates and boxes, consider using reusable ones. In the long run, you will save money and the environment.

✚ Paper/Cardboard

Who could forget the old school cardboard box? Yes, even these can be used instead of Styrofoam containers.

There will be a ban on the importation of Styrofoam, effective January 01, 2016. While the ban from January 01, will not prohibit the sale of Styrofoam, the EPA in keeping with the Regulations shall guide and encourage the use of recyclable, biodegradable and other environmentally-friendly products. Remember the “environment is everybody’s business”. Join us again next week as we continue to examine the impending Styrofoam ban.

Source:

- *Environmental Protection (Expanded Polystyrene Ban) Regulations, 2015.*
- <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Styrofoam>
- <http://enviroeducation.weebly.com/biodegradable-products-rapidly-replacing-styrofoam.html>.
- <http://www.zerowastekauai.net/styrofoam-free.html>

Share your ideas and questions by sending letters to: “Our Earth, Our Environment”, C/O EIT Division, Environmental Protection Agency, Ganges Street, Sophia, GEORGETOWN, or email us at: eit.epaguyana@gmail.com or you can contact the Agency on 225-5467-9.