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PRESS RELEASE

Widespread support for plastic packaging tax, new research reveals

More than half of consumers in the UK and a third in the US are in favour of a tax on all plastic packaging on food products, new research has shown. The survey of 1,000 consumers, commissioned by specialist PR consultancy Ingredient Communications, also finds that many people are more likely to shop in supermarkets that offer fruit and vegetables without plastic packaging.

In excess of a third of the food sold in the EU is packaged in plastic, and UK supermarkets create more than 800,000 tonnes of plastic packaging waste every year.^{1, 2} A charge for plastic bags has reduced their use in the UK by over 80% since its introduction in 2015.³

The online survey, carried out by research specialists Surveygoo, indicates significant support for economic incentives to reduce the use of plastic food packaging. Over half of 500 consumers in the UK (52%) said they were in favour of a tax on all plastic packaging of food products. In the US, support was lower but still significant, with 33% of American consumers favouring such a tax.

In the UK, 41% of consumers said they would be more likely to buy produce from supermarkets that sold fruit and vegetables without plastic packaging, with only 3% saying this would make them less likely to shop there. In the US, 38% of consumers said they would be more likely to shop in stores selling fruit and vegetables without plastic packaging, although the number saying they were less likely to do so was higher than in the UK (13%).

Richard Clarke, Founder & Managing Director of Ingredient Communications, said: "Our research makes clear that there is high demand for food manufacturers to use more plastic-free packaging, and for supermarkets to introduce plastic-free features into their stores. However, the benefits of plastic packaging for food and beverage products are often overlooked. It helps protect goods from damage, extends shelf life and creates a brand identity, which undoubtedly influences consumers' purchasing decisions. A key challenge for both manufacturers and retailers of food products is to find alternatives to plastic packaging that maintain these benefits for the supply chain and consumers."

¹ *The Grocer*, Plastic packaging increases food waste, study shows, 10 April 2018

² *The Guardian*, Nearly 1m tonnes every year: supermarkets shamed for plastic packaging, 17 January 2018

³ *Gov.uk*, Policy paper Carrier bags: why there's a charge, 11 January 2018

The research company that conducted the survey for Ingredient Communications believes greater support among UK consumers for measures to tackle plastic waste is linked to '[Blue Planet 2](#)', the recent BBC documentary that exposed its impact on marine life.

Neil Cary, Managing Director of Surveygoo, said: "Our research definitely reflects the 'Blue Planet effect' in the UK. Viewers were left in no doubt about the harmful and often heart-breaking impact of plastic waste, and many were inspired to make a change. In the US, while there is still significant support for a plastic tax, the figures are much lower. This probably reflects greater public opposition to taxation generally, as well as greater scepticism about government measures to protect the environment."

In the UK, companies creating packaging waste are currently obliged to buy a 'packaging recovery note' (PRN), which effectively constitutes a tax. As part of its 25-year environmental plan, the UK government is reported to be considering an increase in the cost of PRNs for businesses that package their goods in unrecyclable plastic.

The UK Treasury recently revealed it had received more than 162,000 responses from the public to a consultation on how taxes could help tackle plastic waste and promote recycling. The vast majority said they would back a tax on single-use plastic items, including cups, plastic cutlery, lids and straws.⁴

Support for action against plastic waste varies in the US, where laws are enforced state by state. California is currently the only state with a state-wide ban on plastic bags, and several other counties and cities have plastic bag bans or fees. A law in the state of Michigan, however, prohibits local governments from banning, regulating or imposing fees on the use of plastic bags or other plastic containers.

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About Ingredient Communications

Based near London, Ingredient Communications specialises in global PR & communications for suppliers of ingredients to the food, beverage, dietary supplement and personal care sectors. To find out more, visit www.ingredientcommunications.com.

About SurveyGoo

Surveygoo are market research consultants, specialising in online quantitative surveys. They design, programme and run online surveys using proprietary tools, and operate panels in the UK and Asia-Pacific. They work with small and large enterprises, with a strong track record helping Marketing and PR agencies. Surveygoo is owned by Asia Opinions Ltd, a

⁴ *The Telegraph, Tax on 'bad plastic' expected to be signed off by Government to boost recycling, 18 August 2018*

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