

# VerPlaPoS – Avoiding Plastic Waste through Purchasing Decisions

## Plastics in the Environment – Sources · Sinks · Solutions

Consumers play a critical role in the consumption of plastics in Germany through their purchasing decisions. It is hardly possible to avoid plastics completely in everyday life – especially since many people are not aware of how much plastic they unintentionally put into circulation or into the environment when purchasing a product. However, consumers can influence the use of plastic by choosing specific products when shopping. Stakeholders from various sectors are collaborating in the joint research project VerPlaPoS to investigate how customers can avoid plastic waste directly at the point of sale through their purchasing decisions and how best to support them in doing so. This is being examined using food packaging and clothing textiles as examples.

### Plastics in Retail: How Much is Generated?

While plastics in food packaging immediately catch the eye in supermarkets, they are often not as obvious in textiles. However, plastics are also involved in the packaging and transport of clothing. The project partners will therefore first determine consumers' knowledge on plastics and also investigate the reasons that influence the purchase of plastic-packed food or textiles. This research will be conducted directly at the point of sale, in various food and textile shops in Straubing, Bavaria. Product selection at a given point of sale also plays a significant role in the purchasing decision. Therefore, the research teams will examine the assortment in the shops. In addition, the associated plastic waste and disposal routes as well as the respective upstream value chains are considered. This will help to determine how much plastic waste a certain range of goods generates, both in the stores themselves and in the upstream steps.

### Developing Strategies against Plastics

Based on the findings, the researchers will then develop specific strategies to reduce the amount of plastic consumed. In addition, they will evaluate new food packaging and test whether these are indeed more environmentally friendly than plastics. Together with partners from the textile industry, the entire textile supply chain will be examined to determine how plastics can be avoided. Where the use of plastics is unavoidable scientists are trying to develop new recycling solutions: Using innovative manufacturing processes, they plan on producing new materials for clothing.

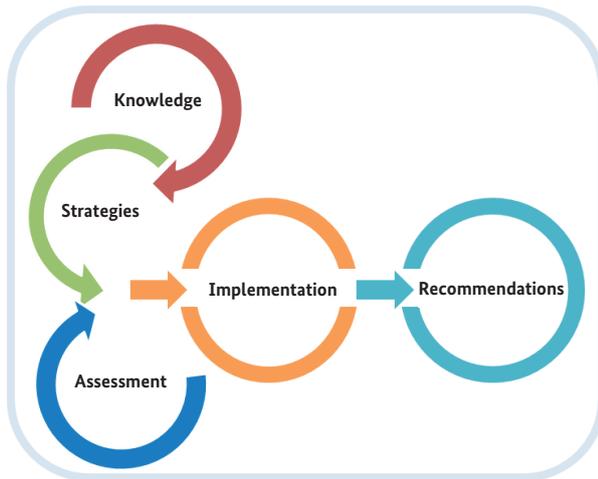


Food such as cured meats is often found in plastic packaging.

### Products and Solutions in Practice

The project participants will determine whether the new products and solutions could make a significant contribution to avoid plastics by looking at product life cycles. This information will result in a plastic index, among other things. It will summarize criteria such as the packaging material used, its recyclability and the associated environmental impact. Consumers will benefit from this index and further information on the problems caused by plastics in certain products in the form of an app. It will provide information on the overall size of e.g. the “plastic backpack” of a product and can thus influence the purchasing decision. The app will later be tested in conjunction with some of the products and solutions developed within the project in the stores of partner companies in the food and textile industries.

The plastic avoidance strategies, that are implemented in practice, form the basis of recommendations for action in the sectors investigated. With their help, retailers and consumers can contribute to avoiding plastics in everyday life.



The conceptual framework of the joint research project VerPlaPoS

#### Research Focus

Plastics in the Environment – Sources • Sinks • Solutions

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Consumer Behaviour Related to Plastic and its Avoidance at the Point of Sale (VerPlaPoS)

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