

# - Teacher guidelines for case study - National green regulations and policies - The use and recycling of plastic products



## Generic green skills

### Cognitive competencies:

- Environmental awareness and a willingness to learn about sustainable development
- Ability to make judgments based on both evidence and sustainability values

### Interpersonal competencies:

- Communication and negotiation skills to discuss conflicting interests in complex contexts
- Marketing skills to promote greener products and services
- Consulting skills to advise consumers about green solutions and to spread the use of green technologies

### Technological competencies:

- Impact and use minimization



## Learning objective

### Students are expected to:

1. Study and summarize newly released national green policies and legislation.
2. Understand how these policies affect individuals, businesses, industries and societies.
3. Suggest measures to implement these policies.



## Format

Group study, in groups of 5 or 6



## Role of teacher

Facilitator



## Resources needed

A3 paper, pens, colored pencils, student worksheet, case study



## Time required

1.5 hours



## Assessment

### The assessment will be based on:

Group discussion and role-play activity. The assessment is based on the clarity of the students' arguments; the analysis of the policy effect and corresponding strategies proposed; and the ability to advocate the use of green packaging.

## Suggested teaching and learning sequences

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### Before the class:

1. Read and become familiar with the following three policies and regulations:
    - a. Opinions on Further Strengthening the Control of Plastic Pollution.
    - b. Opinions on Accelerating the Green Transformation of Courier Packaging.
    - c. Law of the People's Republic of China on the Prevention and Control of Environmental Pollution by Solid Waste (2020 Revision).
  2. Send the three documents to students and ask them to identify the main points in each and think about the links between documents.
  3. Ask students to search for additional information and background material online that are relevant to these three documents.
  4. Ask students to identify examples of companies, businesses and courier companies that are responding to these policies.
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### During the class:

#### 1. Group sharing: summarize and classify the policy (20 mins)

- a. Put students into groups of 5-6.
- b. Ask students to summarise the key points in the three documents and write these on the A3 paper.
- c. Guide students to analyze the links between the three documents, and share their ideas in their groups.
- d. Invite one or two groups to share with the class.
- e. List the key points mentioned in students' presentations, and explain the links between the three documents to students.

#### 2. Group discussion: discuss policy implications (40 mins)

- a. Ask each group to choose an industry sector from the following options. Make sure each group selects a different sector. Ask each group member to choose a different role within the chosen sector.
  - i. **Roles in the courier logistics sector** – garment shop owners on Taobao, heads of courier companies, couriers, consumers of garment shops on Taobao, heads of courier packaging producers, courier logistics packaging recycling administrators.
  - ii. **Roles in the food packaging sector** – head of the packaging department of a biscuit producer, head of the sales department of a packaging materials producer, head of the sales department of a biscuit producer, supermarket or retail shop managers, biscuit consumers, and biscuit packaging designers.
  - iii. **Roles in the municipal waste disposal sector** – municipal waste management policy makers, heads of municipal waste sorting and disposal companies, sanitation workers, solid waste handlers in packaging production companies, packers in supermarket fresh produce departments, common citizens.
  - iv. **Roles in the catering takeout sector** – catering shop staff, takeout delivery staff, persons placing food orders, company head of takeout packaging producer, suppliers of takeout packaging materials, takeout packaging designers.

- b. Facilitate students' group discussion on **how their role will be affected by these policies and what responding strategies they will use.**

You can give them an example to clarify the questions: if you were the owner of a garment shop on Taobao, what impact will these policies have on you? How would you respond to them?

Ask students to use data to support their arguments. For example, will the cost of packaging increase with the use of degradable plastic bags? How can you advocate this to your stakeholders?

### 3. Role play and simulation: advise and promote the use of greener products and services (30 mins)

- a. Ask students to decide on a line of argument depending on their roles in their group. Explain to students that they need to identify:
- How can they respond to the policies?
  - How do they negotiate/inform the other stakeholders (those students who are playing different roles in their group in the same sector) about implementation of the strategies.
- b. Ask students to explain the strategies they propose for positively responding to the policies to the identified stakeholders. Suggest students use some illustrations and graphs to clearly explain: what they want to do, and why they want/need to do that.
- c. Ask students to advise the stakeholders about what they can do to support their strategies for promoting green packaging and responding to the policies. You can suggest they made additions to the policy to ensure it provides increased benefits to sustainable development. Suggest student to refer to the concept of closed loop economy to provide strong arguments and suggestions.

You can give students an example to demonstrate the role play: if you are the owner of a garment shop on Taobao, one of your strategies could be to combine the packages from the garment manufacturers and the couriers to avoid secondary packaging. The stakeholders may then include the heads of the courier company and the garment manufacturer. So students may advise the courier company to provide packages for the garment manufacturer, or organize a different logistics or organize a collection of packaging for recycle or re-use.

### Suggested answers/examples for the activities

#### 1. Group sharing: summarize and classify the policy (20 mins)

##### *The relations between the three documents:*

Plastic waste and courier packaging waste are solid waste, and over 80% of courier packaging is composed of plastics. Article 68 of the *Law on the Prevention and Control of Environmental Pollution by Solid Waste* addresses the requirements for green packaging and reduced packaging. Article 69 prohibits and restricts the production, sale and use of disposable plastic products, such as non-degradable plastic bags. It also makes provisions for the use of disposable plastic products by e-commerce platform enterprises, courier companies and takeout enterprises. *The Opinions on Further Strengthening the Control of Plastic Pollution* is therefore a policy based on the provisions in Article 68 and Article 69 of the *Law on the Prevention and Control of Environmental Pollution by Solid Waste*. The *Opinions on Accelerating the Green Transformation of Courier Packaging* is a policy based on the two documents: the *Law on the Prevention and Control of Environmental Pollution by Solid Waste* and the *Opinions on Further Strengthening the Control of Plastic Pollution*. The intersection of the three documents is related to the management of solid waste caused by polluting plastics.

***The main points of the three documentations are summarized as follows:***

- a. *The Opinions on Further Strengthening the Control of Plastic Pollution* proposes different timetables for banning and restricting the production, sale and use of some plastic products; promotes the application of alternative products and models; regulates the recycling and disposal of plastic waste; and identifies banned and restricted plastic products, including non-degradable plastic bags, disposable plastic tableware, disposable plastic products for hotels and guest houses, and courier plastic packaging.
- b. *The Opinions on Accelerating the Green Transformation of Courier Packaging* is designed to reduce courier packaging materials from the source; reinforce the governance of plastic pollution in the courier sector; encourage major cities to phase out non-degradable plastic packaging bags and disposable plastic woven bags; reduce the use of non-degradable plastic tape; reduce the secondary packaging of e-commerce shipments; promote the application of recyclable packaging; and regulate the recycling and disposal of courier packaging waste.
- c. *The Law of the People's Republic of China on the Prevention and Control of Environmental Pollution by Solid Waste* is to set up the principles of reduction, resourcefulness and harmlessness in the prevention and control of environmental pollution from solid waste; restrict the production, sale and use of non-degradable plastic bags and other disposable plastic products; encourage and guide the use of recyclable, degradable alternatives to plastic products; and mandate reporting obligations on the use and recycling of single-use plastic products for specific sectors, such as retail merchandise establishments, e-commerce platform companies and courier companies.

## **2. Group discussion: discuss policy implications (40 mins)**

You can use some role play and situation descriptions to inspire students. For instance:

I am an owner of a garment shop on Taobao. The products I sell are usually in their original packaging provided by the garment manufacturer, and then a courier offers an additional outside packaging before delivering to consumers.

These three policies would affect me in the following ways:

- i. Non-biodegradable plastic cannot be used as packaging materials by either the garment manufacturer or the courier.
- ii. Discarded plastic bags will be sorted into specific bins and cannot be combined with other garbage.

My response strategies might be:

- i. Arrange negotiations between the garment manufacturers and couriers in order to combine the two packages into one, which will avoid secondary packaging.
- ii. Select bags made from degradable plastic or bags produced from recycled plastic materials, or other waterproof alternatives to plastics.
- iii. Use recyclable courier bags.
- iv. Hand over discarded bags to special plastic recycling organizations or courier packaging recycling organizations.

### 3. Role play and simulation: advise and promote the use of greener products and services (30 mins)

In relation to the example given above, the stakeholders may include the heads of courier companies, the head of garment manufacturers, courier packaging producers, and packaging recycling administrators. To ask for support for the proposed strategies, students may advise the courier company to provide recyclable packages for the garment manufacturers and organize a collection of packaging for recycle or re-use. Students may also suggest financial incentives to the policy for the purposes of subsidizing the cost of using degradable plastic bag. Students can also create a close-loop model to explain how to minimize waste from the degradable plastic bag production, distribution, use/reuse, collection and recycling.

#### Reference:

关于进一步加强塑料污染治理的意见，国家发改委、生态环境部，2020年1月

*Opinions on Further Strengthening the Control of Plastic Pollution*, National Development and Reform Commission, Ministry of Ecology and Environment, January 2020

中华人民共和国固体废物污染环境防治法（2020修订），全国人大常委会，2020年4月

*Law of the People's Republic of China on the Prevention and Control of Environmental Pollution by Solid Waste (2020 Revision)*, Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, April 2020

关于加快推进快递包装绿色转型的意见，国家发改委，国家邮政局等，2020年11月

*Opinions on Accelerating the Green Transformation of Courier Packaging*, National Development and Reform Commission, State Post Bureau, etc., November 2020