# Plastic Waste Management (Second Amendment) Rules, 2021

## What is the issue?

The Union government notified the Plastic Waste Management (Second Amendment) Rules, 2021 allowing recycled plastic in food packaging.

## What was the earlier case of recycled plastic?

- The 2016 rule mentions that carry bags or products made of recycled plastic shall not be used for storing, carrying, dispensing or packaging ready to eat or drink foodstuff.
- In 2018,the FSSAI banned the use of recycled plastic or newspaper for packaging of food items from July 1, 2019.

## What is the new amendment about?

- The new rules provide a moratorium of 10 years to big companies to keep polluting since more single-use plastic products will be added to the phase-out list only after a decade.
- It has also allowed the use of recycled plastics for packing food products.

## What are the concerns of using recycled plastic?

- India recycles 60 per cent of its plastic waste and most of this is done by the informal workforce in the country.
- Industrial packaging happens to be the highest user of plastic.
- The unscientific methods used by the informal workforce to produce plastic pellets raise concerns, especially around the contamination and purity of the recycled plastic.
- Plastic is used in a variety of sectors ranging from medicines, electronic equipment to chemical fertilizers and using such plastics in food contact applications is a concern.
- No standards were prescribed for recycling of plastic making it difficult to understand the chemical conformity of the recycled plastic.
- A growing body of research proves there is migration of chemicals (additives) from plastics to the food.

## What are the global practices regarding the use of recycled plastics?

- In the U.S., manufacturers are responsible for ensuring that the recycled product is of suitable purity.
- The European Union has come up with a ‘plastic strategy’ in 2018 to transform the way plastic products are designed, produced, used and recycled in the EU.
- Korea’s Ministry of Food and Drug Safety revised its legislation allowing only chemically recycled resins in parts that do not come into direct contact with food.
- The Chinese agency is now conducting an industry survey and initiating a risk assessment method for recycled food contact materials.

## What are the recommendations for India?

- Our plastic has to be recycled in authorised recycling facilities.
- The use of recycled plastic should have been mandated for non-food applications initially to understand the issues.
- An inventory of the types of processes for recycling is needed and the safe method has to be identified and used for food contact applications.
- Guidelines on the source of the post-consumer plastic waste, type of polymer that can be used, the average time of plastic-food contact, temperature of the food, etc. are required.
- A working mechanism needs to be developed with all the stakeholders including MoEFCC, FSSAI, CPCB, SPCB, Urban Local Bodies, representatives of the plastic industry as well as consumers.

**Source: Down to Earth**

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