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Calls to Ban Plastic Bags Mount in Russia as Trash Crisis Deepens

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Russian lawmakers have stepped up calls to ban plastic bags over the past week amid mounting concerns about pollution and Russia's national waste crisis.

Moscow's plan to export its waste to surrounding regions has riled Russian citizens in recent months, while nationwide trash reforms threaten to shut down garbage collectors in nine regions. In the European Union, plastic items such as straws, forks and knives as well as cotton buds will be banned by 2021, and Russia's Leningrad region banned single-use plastics last year.

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"I think, firstly, we need to start by banning supermarkets from giving out any bags for free, like in European countries," Moscow region Duma deputy Alla Polyakova said Monday.

“Second, we need to start with ourselves. [We should] fully ban plastic products in the government,” Polyakova, who chairs the regional legislative environmental committee, was quoted by the regional Duma website as saying.

Her proposal comes less than a week after a senior member of the State Duma’s Natural Resources Committee asked the government to consider banning plastic bags in Russia by 2025.

“I’m absolutely convinced that the transition period will be enough to prepare the economy for this step,” lawmaker Vasily Vlasov wrote to Deputy Prime Minister Alexei Gordeyev, the state-run RIA Novosti news agency reported on Thursday.

More than 26 billion plastic bags are handed out every year in shops across Russia, according to Greenpeace. UN estimates say only 9 percent of 9 billion metric tons of plastic produced in the world has been recycled.

Reuters contributed reporting to this article.

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