

Maya's Plastic Pollution Campaign

to ban plastic price look-up (PLU) stickers



Frequently Asked Questions

What is a PLU?

A produce sticker carries a **price look-up code (PLU)** to help grocery stores track their inventory and, at checkout counters, identify the product and its cost. You can find them on fruit and vegetables everywhere. PLU codes are the same throughout the world for individual items. For example, a Macintosh apple would have the same code on its PLU wherever it's sold in the world.



Why are PLUs a problem for the environment?

These little stickers are usually made of vinyl, a plastic product or paper coated with vinyl. Plastic PLUs don't break down. They become plastic pollution in our soil and water.

If PLUs are put in the compost bin, they will end up at your municipality's composting facility where sorting them out is time-consuming and expensive. The stickers are extremely thin and pliable so they can pass through screens designed to catch them and other non-compostable items. When a load of organic material from green bins and other sources contains many plastic PLUs, it gets sent to a landfill site instead of the composting facility. In a landfill, the organic matter will break down creating methane, a greenhouse gas that contributes to climate damage.

If PLUs go down your sink when you're washing fruit or vegetables, they can help to create "fatbergs" in the sewer lines. A "fatberg" is a wad of waste matter in a sewer line formed by a combination of non-biodegradable solids from sinks, tubs and toilets. This can include fat, oil and grease as well as PLUs and supposedly "flushable" wet wipes. Also, PLUs are thin and flexible so they can pass through the wastewater plant's screens ending up in rivers and lakes. Fish and wildlife can mistake the PLUs for food and eat them.

What's the solution?

There are solutions – two countries have already banned the use of plastic PLUs. Several biodegradable and "certified" compostable paper stickers are available. There are stickerless coding programs where the fruit or vegetable gets laser-etched with the codes much like a tattoo.

Expanding the ban to include plastic PLUs means the federal government will regulate the ban and industry will move faster to use plastic-free solutions by a deadline. Until we succeed with the ban, remember to peel off the PLU stickers on your fruit and vegetables. Put the stickers in the garbage, not the green bin, not your home compost and not down the sink!



Join **Maya's Plastic Pollution Campaign** to call for a ban on the use of plastic PLU stickers. Canada has already banned six items that are single-use plastics. It's time to **#ExpandtheBan** to include plastic PLU stickers. You can help create awareness of the pollution impact of PLU stickers by collecting them in an album and sending them to your Member of Parliament. Head to foecanada.org for more information.



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