

# Researchers to conduct major Japan ocean microplastics survey

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Scientists will begin a two-year survey of microplastics in the coastal waters off Japan from April, a research group announced on Wednesday,

with concern growing about the impact of plastics on the oceans.

The survey organised by Japanese scientists and the Tara Ocean Foundation will be conducted by several marine research facilities located across Japan, from the northern island of Hokkaido to southwestern Kyushu.

Researchers will collect samples for analysis of microplastics and measure their impact on [marine life](#), as well as work to raise awareness locally about the issue.

The Tara Ocean Foundation last year produced an unprecedented study of [plastic](#) pollution in European rivers, finding 100 percent of its samples contained plastic and microplastics.

"These rather alarming findings led us to prepare a project here in Japan," the group's executive director Romain Trouble said at a press conference in Tokyo.

The goal, he said, would not be to point the finger at a particular region.

"We're trying to find out what this plastic pollution is and where it comes from, so [public funding](#) goes to the right place to stop plastic pollution," he said.

The project will also be a chance to talk to local communities, including the fishing industry, schoolchildren and municipalities, and discuss the role that each can play in consuming, sorting and recycling.

The group's flagship vessel Tara has been to Japan before, for a 2017 survey of coral in the Pacific Ocean, but will not be involved in the new project.

Instead, the research will rely on the Japanese Association for Marine Biology (JAMBIO) network, which has more than 20 coastal facilities equipped with research infrastructure.

"It is really very important to have figures which allow the development of strategies to limit this pollution but also to create models that illustrate the flow of plastic," said Sylvain Agostini, a researcher at Tsukuba University, who will be part of the project.

Some eight million tons of plastics enter the world's oceans every year, and the issue has gained increasing attention in Japan.

The government has pledged to reduce the country's annual 9.4 million tones of plastic waste by 25 percent by 2030, and will ban free plastic bags in supermarkets later this year.

After the Japan survey, the Foundation is considering turning its attention to China, Trouble said, linking up with local universities for a similar survey there.

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