

Senegal bans most single-use plastics

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A ban on single-use plastics came into effect in Senegal on Monday, although the government has said it will allow the sale of plastic water sachets until the coronavirus pandemic ends.

The West African country won plaudits from environmentalists when it issued a law in January banning the import and sale of [single-use plastics](#) such as drinking straws, small bags and coffee cups.

The move was a response to the large volumes of pollution across Senegal, where streets and beaches are often littered with plastic waste.

The ban also originally included water sachets—which are ubiquitous in the country—but Environment Minister Abdou Karim Sall said that these would be exempt until the end of the coronavirus [pandemic](#).

In a statement on Saturday, the minister said the government had decided to "relax the application of certain provisions of the law that have a strong economic and [social impact](#)" as Senegal grapples with the virus.

Authorities have recorded 377 COVID-19 cases in the country to date, with five fatalities.

The ban on single-use plastics that came into effect on Monday builds on a similar law in 2015, which banned the sale of thin plastic bags but was barely enforced.

The new law also bans imports of plastic waste, and provides for sanctioning wrongdoers. People who dump plastics can face up to a month in jail, for example.

Personal protective equipment, such as hospital gloves and gowns, are not mentioned in the law.

"All types of [plastic](#) bags are banned," said an environment ministry official who declined to be named.

He admitted, however, that although the plastics ban takes effect from Monday, strict government enforcement of the measures during the coronavirus pandemic is unlikely.

On Sunday, environmental NGO Greenpeace nonetheless welcomed the latest move.

"It's encouraging that despite the current COVID-19 pandemic, progress to reduce [single-use](#) plastics is being made here in Senegal," said campaigner Awa Traore in a statement.

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