

# Country Situation Report on Plastic in Cameroon

## Executive summary – Report



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By AFEPB



## Executive Summary

Over the past few decades, the massive production of plastics worldwide has posed a real threat to the existence and well-being of all living creatures. This virtually uncontrollable rise in the use of plastics is a matter of serious concern to health professionals, environmentalists and biodiversity advocates. In Cameroon, the issue is just as pressing, and requires special attention from all stakeholders. With this in mind, “**Action des Femmes pour une Planète Bio (AFEPB)**”, a non-profit organisation committed to supporting government action towards safeguarding the planet from the threats posed by climate change, hazardous waste and substances, and many others, has deliberately set out to assess the situation of plastics in Cameroon. The purpose of this initiative supported by the IPEN Francophone Africa Hub is to promote the development and well-being of the local population, especially the most vulnerable groups such as women, young people and minorities. As part of this project, our focus has been on researching and collecting data on plastic flows in Cameroon, with a view to fostering national and international action. Similarly, we focused on raising awareness among decision-makers and managers in the private sector on the one hand, and consumer associations and the general public via the print, online and social media on the other hand.

While compiling data for the purpose of this report, we had to overcome a number of obstacles, given that information on the production, marketing and even export and recycling of plastic materials is kept secret by the industry. Even after sending out several requests on the subject, and submitting various survey forms to companies dealing in the production of plastic materials as well as relevant government departments, especially ministries, we received virtually no information on the quantities produced in tonnes every month or every year. Fortunately, we managed to get some credible data on the production, import, export and even recycling of plastic-based materials in the country thanks to Cameroon’s National Institute of Statistics (NIS).

In recent years, the commitment demonstrated by the international community to phase out plastic pollution and its by-products has led to a great deal of restraint from the part of the main producers and other players involved in the plastic distribution chain, when it comes to disclosing figures on the quantity, quality or even route taken by materials produced or collected after use. However, the approach used for the purpose of this study involved creating a climate of serenity and mutual trust with the target stakeholders, so as to create an enabling environment for gathering key information. We worked in close collaboration with a number of producers, importers and exporters, the Chamber of Commerce, the

Ministry of the Environment, Nature Protection and Sustainable Development, the Ministry of Mines, Industry and Technological Development, the Ministry of Commerce, and the Cameroon National Institute of Statistics (NIS) to collect data on plastic flows in Cameroon in general, and more specifically on plastic waste.

Data collected on the field reveals that seven main types of plastic are marketed in Cameroon, namely:

- Polyethylene terephthalate (PET)
- High-density polyethylene (HDPE)
- Polyvinyl chloride (PVC)
- Low-density polyethylene (LDPE)
- Polypropylene (PP)
- Polystyrene (PS)
- Polyimide (PI)

In addition, data collected by the National Institute of Statistics between 2015 and 2021 reveals that ***an average of 121.5 million tonnes of plastic materials are imported into the country every year.*** This means that between 2015 and 2021 alone, 121.5 million tonnes of plastic materials have been imported into the country per year, i.e., **just over 850 million tonnes** in 6 years. On the other hand, **the average quantity of exported plastics is close to 646,000 tonnes per year**, for a total of over 4,522,000 tonnes between 2015 and 2021. Based on a comparative study of the total quantity of plastics currently available in Cameroon (national production<sup>1</sup> + imports and exports), and on credible NIS data, **an average of 120 million tonnes of plastics circulate in the country every year.** If we subtract the very small share of plastics collected for **reuse or recycling (around 248,500 tonnes per year, or 0.21%, according to data collected by MINEPDED)**, the remaining quantity, **over 99% of waste, ends up in the environment (there are no centers in Cameroon specialising in the collection of waste for potential rational disposal)**, more precisely in terrestrial and marine ecosystems, or is subject to uncontrolled incineration.

Furthermore, according to Loïc, a young plastic waste collection team leader who has been in Yaounde for the past 3 months, **the average quantity of mainly single-use plastic waste, particularly PET, collected by his team of 30 people is 1,250 bundles of 100kg each per month, i.e. around 125 tonnes per month.** (Note that this waste is collected in markets, shopping centers, garbage dumps and sometimes even on the streets). This plastic waste is collected and sold to a company named [Source du Pays](#). Unfortunately, we don't have enough

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<sup>1</sup> No access to data on domestic plastic production

information about what happens next. Also, the 2020 Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) report published by Société Anonyme des Brasseries du Cameroun (SABC) reveals that the win-win partnership between SABC and Namé Recycling has led to the **collection and recycling of 100 million plastic bottles in 2 years, between 2018 and 2020**. There are also a number of recyclers involved in the collection of plastic waste, including [Iso-Tech SARL](#), [SC2R](#), [Red Plast](#) and many more. Unfortunately, we did not succeed to have information on the quantities of plastic waste collected by these organisations every month or year.

Although Cameroon has signed various international conventions on waste management, including the ongoing process for a treaty on plastics, the national policy on the specific management of plastic waste is not yet as strong as expected. Existing national laws regulate toxic and hazardous waste in general, but regulations on plastic waste are still in their early stages.

Unfortunately, to date, Cameroon has no legal framework defining harmful chemicals and prohibiting their use in items, including plastics. The only framework regulating plastics is the joint 2012 decree by the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Commerce, which came into force in 2014 and bans the production of packaging under 60 microns. It's worth noting that this joint decree makes no reference to the chemical additives contained in plastics, let alone the ingredients used in their production. It is clear that the country has no regulations in place to address the issue of chemical additives of concern in the millions of plastic materials in use. This is certainly one of the major challenges that the new national focal point on the plastic treaty, and certainly Cameroon's civil society, should focus on over the next decade.

This is why it is essential to strengthen the legal and regulatory framework for plastic waste and the chemical additives it contains, as well as extended producer responsibility (EPR), awareness-raising, collection and recycling initiatives.