

**IPEN Toxics-Free SDGs Phase 3, COVID-19 and Industry Rollbacks Project  
Prohibition of single-use plastics and Roll Back of Morelos Waste Law**

**Accion Ecologica,  
Morelos, Mexico,  
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## **Executive Summary**

In January 2020, the ban on single-use plastics came into force in the territory of Morelos, leaving 90 days for the development of the regulations of the Morelos Waste Law<sup>1</sup>, which would establish the rules to materialize said ban, which, among other things, also established the obligation for commercial establishments to submit to the environmental authority a single-use plastics substitution program.

However, local authorities intend to publish a regulation that establishes exceptions to the prohibition for hygiene and safety reasons, which would leave the door open for large companies to continue granting these plastics to consumers, rendering the prohibition ineffective.

As a result of the pandemic, the use of plastics has increased, with the idea that it is a COVID security measure offered by supermarkets and food stores, sending the message to the public that the use of plastics is safe.

We saw in Morelos state how a representative of a recycling association participated in local regulation to prevent a ban on single-use of plastics from becoming a reality. All this is compounded by public ignorance of the toxicity of plastic, especially to vulnerable groups such as women and children.

Therefore, we consider it extremely important to influence public environmental policies; in this case, environmental legislation on plastics, accompanied by an intense information and awareness campaign among the population about the danger of plastics.

The campaign has two objectives:

1. Do advocacy work with local legislators to enforce the single-use plastics ban approved in the Morelos Waste Law.
2. Do awareness-raising and information work among the population about the deregulation and the real dangers of plastic in health, especially to women and children, and the environment.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://periodico.morelos.gob.mx/obtenerPDF/2020/5773.pdf>

The activities within the project included an in-depth legal analysis of the ban on single-use plastics by various entities and cities in the country, intending to contrast with the reform of the Morelos Waste Law published in January 2020.

When the legal analyses were done, virtual meetings were held with key actors from academia, civil society organizations, groups of young environmentalists, government authorities, and staff from supermarkets, small businesses, and markets. In this work, a very interesting finding was the identification of a key actor that had not been taken into account in the advocacy work. We refer to the union of grouped merchants who have been very interested in complying with the ban on granting single-use plastics; however, fear prevails, because there is not a complete understanding of the scope of the reform that came into force on Jan 18, 2021. Added to this, have had unfortunate approaches with municipal governments, who threaten to fine them, without a prior awareness campaign, thus increasing the risk that the prohibition could be used for acts of corruption by the authority. From our point of view, this would be detrimental to social acceptance of the protective and progressive spirit of law reform. We also detect that they lack information on low-cost alternatives in the market to substitute these materials.

Another of the social groups with which we had contact was the group of young environmentalists "*11 y nos Vamos*". We conducted a brand audit in three of the main ravines in Cuernavaca and Temixco to obtain information on which products (and how many of them) were being discarded during the pandemic.

This activity was documented photographically and the information was made public via the media, highlighting the dangerousness of plastics, and asking the state government to eliminate the exceptions to the prohibition of single-use plastics from the regulation. A working group was established by the government, made up of various civil society organizations to spread awareness about the problem.

A discussion was also organized with academics and civil society organizations to discuss the danger of the increase in the generation of single-use plastics during the pandemic and the importance of eliminating exceptions to the prohibition in the regulations of the law.

Within the framework of the entry into force of the ban on single-use plastics, two infographics, and a digital brochure was launched on the Facebook pages of Acción Ecológica, Citizen Observatory of Air Quality, and in that of the Plastic Collective No Thanks.

We had intense work with the media to insist on the importance of eliminating the exceptions, and publish the regulations. As a result of media pressure and the alliance with the Chambers of Commerce and other actors, the state government agreed to install another virtual working group, to analyze the latest version of the regulation.

Due to the health emergency, it was impossible to hold face-to-face meetings with legislators from the local Congress; however, we were in constant communication with the assistant of one of the deputies with whom we work to promote changes to the law. We also sent them the infographics attached.