

## **Countdown to phase-out single-use plastic carrier bags by end of 2018**

*350 million plastic bags to be removed every year*

*SuperValue and FreshChoice also committed to being single-use plastic carrier bag free*

**4 October 2017:** Today Countdown has announced that single-use plastic carrier bags will be phased-out from its stores and online shopping by the end of 2018.

In November, Countdown will announce twenty corporate responsibility and sustainability commitments out to 2020. The plastic bag target will become a key part of Countdown's broader efforts on waste minimisation, which already includes the Countdown Food Rescue programme and the target towards zero food waste.

Countdown's Managing Director Dave Chambers says, "Now is the right time to take the lead, phase-out single-use plastic carrier bags and introduce better options for customers. This move will result in the removal of 350 million plastic bags from our waste stream and environment.

"We have been tracking customer sentiment for two years and our most recent research, concluded in August, indicates that 83% of our customers support phasing-out single-use plastic carrier bags.

"In May 2016, Countdown introduced New Zealand's first plastic bag free supermarket on Waiheke Island, where customers are bringing their own bags and we have compostable bags on sale for 15 cents. Customers adapted quickly to plastic bag free check-outs, and we have had very positive feedback.

"We're confident Kiwis will get in behind this change across the country, and we're committed to making the move away from check-out bags as simple for customers as we can."

As a first step, from Monday 9 October the price of Countdown's reusable bags will be permanently reduced to \$1 each (from the current price of \$1.39). More affordable and sustainable initiatives will be introduced over the coming months.

Progressive Enterprises' franchise supermarket brands, SuperValue and FreshChoice have also committed to phasing-out single-use plastic carrier bags as soon as they can. Both these brands are finalising their transition deadline. In the meantime, compostable and paper bags are already on trial in a number of SuperValue and FreshChoice stores.

The phase-out will also apply to Countdown's national online shopping service. Trials are already underway to replace the use of single-use plastic bags in deliveries. Further, from Monday 9 October, Countdown online shoppers living in areas where the Soft Plastics Recycling scheme is in place (Auckland, Hamilton, Wellington and South Island) will be able to return their soft plastics to their delivery driver for recycling, instead of taking them into store.

As part of planning, Countdown considered whether to introduce a charge on plastic bags.

Dave Chambers says, "We decided that charging for single-use plastic carrier bags was not the right option for Countdown and its customers. Charging is also not the ideal outcome for the environment, because these bags are still provided."

Countdown currently invests \$8 million annually in-cash and in-kind to community and environmental initiatives. It has New Zealand's leading Food Rescue programme, diverting almost \$6m annually worth of food to food banks and food charities, and every year Countdown gives out more than 2.6 million of free pieces of fruit to kids.

Today Countdown has written to all of the 70-plus plastic bag-free community groups around New Zealand asking to work with them to support customers with this change.

**ENDS**

**Additional video footage is available on request.**

**Contact**

For more information, please contact the Countdown Press Office: [media@countdown.co.nz](mailto:media@countdown.co.nz)

**About Countdown**

*Countdown is one of New Zealand's largest employers with around 18,000 team members across 184 supermarkets, distribution centres, processing plants and support offices. We serve around 3 million customers every week, and work with thousands of food producers and suppliers throughout New Zealand. We're committed to being part of the communities we live and work in: some of our activities include the Countdown Kids Hospital Appeal has raised more than \$10.4 million in the past 10 years for children's hospital wards around the country and Countdown Food Rescue donates more than \$3.5 million of food each year to The Salvation Army and other food bank charity partners.*

[www.countdown.co.nz](http://www.countdown.co.nz)