

A study presented by the Packaging Cluster points to an increase of **plastic in the packaging industry and the adverse effects of a tax on single-use plastic packaging**

The study looks at the role of plastic in the food industry, exploring both the benefits and disadvantages associated with its use. It also quantifies the sector in the Catalan and Spanish market and examines a possible growth forecast.

The main conclusions of the study point out that the **use of plastics in the packaging industry** has increased significantly, despite the current negative perception of plastic in society and the legislative restrictions limiting its use. In particular, the implementation of legislation related to the use of disposable plastics has had a notable impact on both industry and consumer economics. This has been reflected in higher prices for products incorporating plastic in addition to inflation. In turn, the **plastic tax**¹ is also generating adverse effects, such as the possible limitation of access to these products for some consumers and its influence on the competitiveness of companies in the market.

Broadly speaking, the tax is €0.45 per kilo of single-use plastic used. From the outset, both companies involved in the manufacture of plastic packaging and any importer or intra-Community purchaser are affected, be it of packaging with or without contents. The regulation will therefore apply to the manufacture, import and intra-Community acquisition, as well as to the irregular introduction of non-reusable plastic packaging. Everyone will have to pay this tax on the weighing of non-recyclable plastic packaging from their sales. In theory, it is the manufacturer who makes the first sale who has to pay the tax and then pass it on to the sales invoice, indicating the tax and the kilos of plastic packaging containing the product. The **introduction of the tax has posed significant challenges**, such as changes in revenue management and the need for liquidity to meet tax obligations while awaiting collection from customers.

By July 2023, the Spanish government had already collected €345 million since the tax came into force on 1st January. The expectation is that by the end of this year they will have collected almost €500 million.

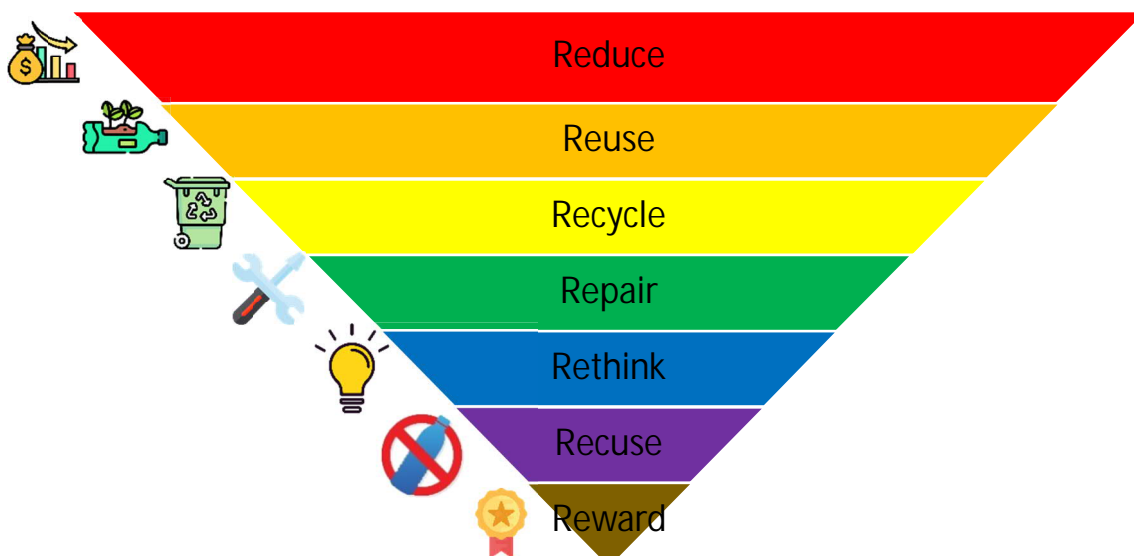


¹ The plastic tax is basically a tax on single-use plastic packaging, introduced in Spain through the approval of [Law 7/2022 of 8 April on waste and contaminated soils for a circular economy](#).

Back to the [Packaging Cluster](#)² study, It also underlines that the choice of packaging material is of vital importance and must be determined by the product in question, the method of transport and its particular properties. Today, there is a wide variety of alternative materials to traditional plastic, although they can sometimes be less resistant and present greater challenges in terms of recycling. It is therefore essential to carry out a Product Life Cycle Analysis and objectively compare materials and their alternatives. To facilitate this process, the Packaging Cluster is developing a tool called "[Packimpact](#)" dedicated exclusively to packaging, which collects local data and enables companies to make informed decisions about their packaging. This initiative has been made possible thanks to a grant from ACCIÓ and with the participation of the cluster's partner companies that launched this tool, such as Alzamora, Font Packaging, Enplater, Glovo, Lucid, NG Plastics, Rieusset, Virospack and Inèdit as co-owner of the tool with the Packaging Cluster.

Additionally, one of the results of the study suggests that a slight growth is expected in the plastic packaging sector until 2027, with an increase of 5.54% in Europe and 2.29% in Spain, according to [Euromonitor](#) data. Finally, as a summary of the conclusions obtained in the study, we can affirm that plastic is a versatile material widely used in various industries, including the food industry, thanks to its physical characteristics. Although the growth of the sector presents challenges in terms of waste management and sustainability, it is essential to highlight that the impact of packaging is relatively low compared to other sources of pollution.

The study concludes by **promoting the 7Rs strategy (reduce, reuse, recycle, repair, rethink, recuse and reward) to minimise plastic consumption and waste.** The introduction of the plastic tax is a significant step in the direction of moving towards more sustainable alternatives. Despite the controversies, it is essential to appreciate the versatility of plastic and to adopt an equitable approach to its responsible use and proper waste management. Concrete steps are urged to adopt sustainable practices and explore circular technologies and approaches as drivers for a more environmentally conscious future.



² The Packaging Cluster is a non-profit organization that was established in 2012 by Catalan companies and that today brings together more than 140 active members including companies, knowledge centers and entities that represent the entire value chain of the packaging sector.

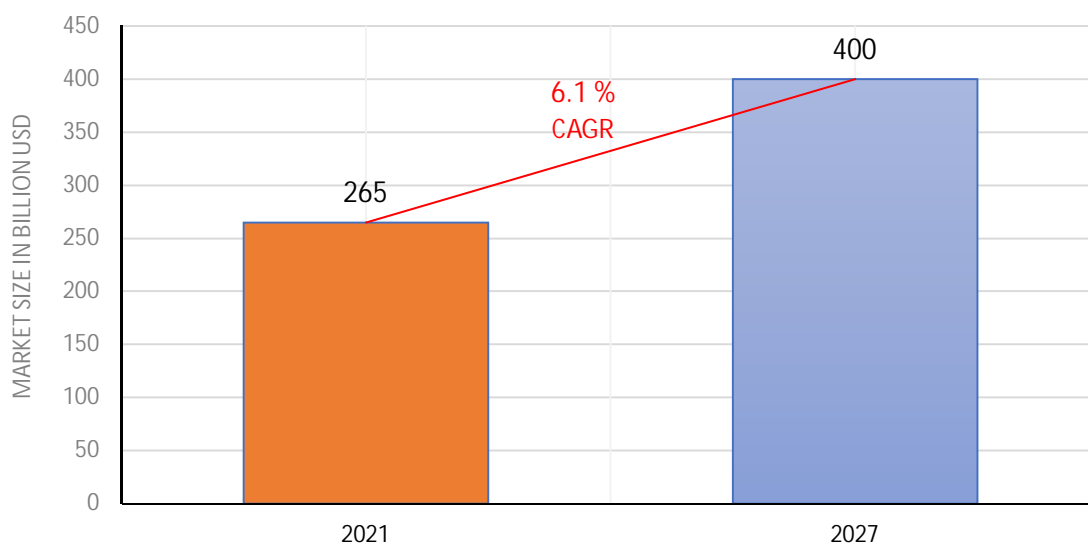
The author of this study is the Packaging Cluster, a non-profit organisation comprising 140 companies in the packaging sector in Catalonia, whose main objective is to help improve the competitiveness of its member companies, with the aim of resolving the challenges of the current context, promoting innovation and generating new business opportunities. As the highest representative of the packaging sector in Catalonia, the Packaging Cluster develops under 5 strategic axes, which are: the generation of innovation projects and new business, strategy and market intelligence, the promotion of international connections, training and talent attraction, and networking and business cooperation.

The cluster will be present in the activities of the Plastix Interreg EU project, as a stakeholder of the participating region of Catalonia, collaborating with the regional representative in the project, the Catalan agency for competitiveness and business internationalisation ACCIÓ.

The importance of the plastic packaging sector is very significant in the whole plastics industry, given the challenges it poses in terms of recyclability, reusability and circular economy, being a sector with a high demand for plastics still today.

If we look at the figures on the size of the sector, according to [Statista](#), The global plastic packaging market was valued at 265 billion USD in 2021. The market is forecast to reach almost 400 billion USD by 2027, registering a CAGR of 6.1 percent during the forecast period 2022 to 2027 (see the graphic below).

Plastic packaging market size worldwide from 2021 to 2027
(in billion USD)



Source: Statista, 2023.