



Trade and the Circular Economy: A Deep Dive on Ghana and Plastic Action

Initial Scoping for White Paper

Background

The World Economic Forum's Global Plastic Action Partnership (GPAP) was forged as a platform to bring together public, private, and civil society actors to address global plastic waste and pollution. Recognizing the urgency to catalyse concerted solutions, the platform was launched in September 2018 with the overarching goal to translate commitments to address plastic pollution into tangible strategies and investible actions plans. GPAP works to drive impact at two levels: global and national. To date, GPAP has established National Plastic Action Partnerships (NPAP) in three countries: Indonesia, Viet Nam, and Ghana; and is in the process of building a new partnership with Nigeria. These locally driven platforms are forging national and regional networks to develop a blueprint for action while coalescing the right actors to operationalize the action plan.

At the international level, amendments to the Basel Convention moving most types of plastic waste into controlled trade processes, in effect from January 2021, raise new questions for regional plastic pollution reduction strategies. Trade policy, when designed with environmental outcomes in mind, can create economies of scale for waste processing and channel investment into countries in need of infrastructure. However, there is a degree of border process friction in reverse material flows for plastic recycling, as well as potential regulatory differences around waste classifications, product design and standards for plastic alternatives, plastic-free labelling initiatives, among others. Trade barriers that could hold back a circular economy for plastic and curb pollution reduction are mapped in a [white paper](#) issued by the World Economic Forum in July 2020.

Objectives and Deliverables

Together with the World Economic Forum's Platform on Shaping the Future of Trade and Global Economic Interdependence and building off joint research on [Plastics, the Circular Economy and Global Trade](#), GPAP seeks to deliver a targeted white paper exploring the manifold opportunities for trade to serve as a lever for the circular economy, using plastic pollution action in Ghana as a case study. Ghana is committed to creating a domestic recycling industry and to protecting informal sector waste pickers, serving as regional leader in this space, while Ghanaian exports will be subject to plastic reduction standards and measures in trade partner economies such as the EU. The latter creates both a challenge and an incentive to transition to more circular business models.

The white paper aims explore the trade related opportunities and challenges for Ghana as part of its National Plastics Management Policy as well as its broader circular economy objectives. This may include, but is not limited to, an analysis through the lens of the EU-Ghana Economic Partnership Agreement, a development-oriented free trade agreement, as well as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), with implications for neighbouring nations, Nigeria included. Ultimately, the white paper aims to provide a holistic set of recommendations for trade and investment policy, technical assistance, and business, the latter targeting both upstream plastic producers and downstream waste collectors and processors, on advancing the circular economy and reducing plastic pollution in Ghana, with additional potential for broader application in the future.

Timeline

GPAP seeks to commence this work no later than 1 March, with a preliminary outline and initial findings delivered by 31 March. A complete, first draft is expected by 31 May, which will be followed by a comprehensive expert review by actors in the trade and plastic action communities at the World Economic Forum. The final draft will be due no later than 15 July.



Contact

For further information or to express interest in leading the development of this white paper please contact: Taylor Clayton taylor.clayton@weforum.org no later than 19 February.