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UNOFFICIAL ROOM DOCUMENT¹

**DIALOGUE ON PLASTIC POLLUTION AND ENVIRONMENTALLY
SUSTAINABLE PLASTICS TRADE (DPP)**

UN CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT (UNCTAD) PRESENTATION ON TRADE IN
PLASTICS, PLASTIC ALTERNATIVES AND NON-PLASTIC SUBSTITUTES: NEW INSIGHTS

Pre-Plenary Meeting – 12 April 2024

DOCUMENT DE SÉANCE NON OFFICIEL¹

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* In Original language only/En langue originale seulement/En el idioma original solamente.

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UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT
UNCTAD

Trade in Plastics, Plastic Alternatives and non-Plastic Substitutes: New insights

DPP Pre-plenary
12.04.2024

Henrique Pacini
SMEP Programme lead
Trade, Environment, Climate Change and Sustainable Development Branch



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Trade in Plastics: Quick facts

369 million tons of plastics traded in 2021 alone.
Which is **\$1.2 trillion in value**, a 30% increase from 2020.

- **0.2%** of which is trade plastic scrap


Plastics travel through trade, but their waste stays! => recycling capacity?

- **Insufficient** in most countries

Need to identify what **alternatives or substitute materials or products** could **effectively and safely substitute** plastics & enable the transition.



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The distinction between plastic substitutes and plastic alternatives

Plastics substitutes are natural materials that have similar properties to plastics, while plastic alternatives include bioplastics or biodegradable plastics.

Plastic substitutes

- Mineral, plant, marine or animal
- Recyclable, reusable, biodegradable, compostable, or erodable
- Should have lower environmental impact along their life cycle
- Should not be hazardous for human, animal or plant life



Non-plastics

VS

Plastic alternatives



- Bioplastics or Biodegradable plastics
- Recyclable, biodegradable, or compostable (end of life)
- Should have lower GHG lifecycle emissions when compared to plastics
- Should not be hazardous for human, animal or plant life

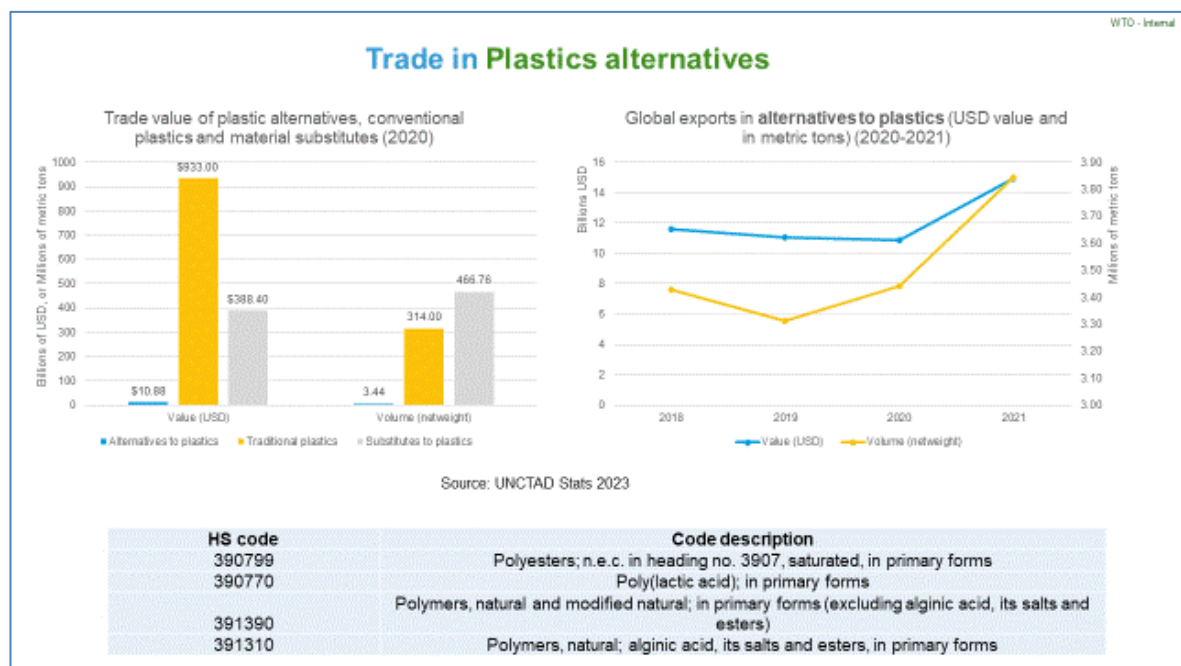
Better plastics (?)

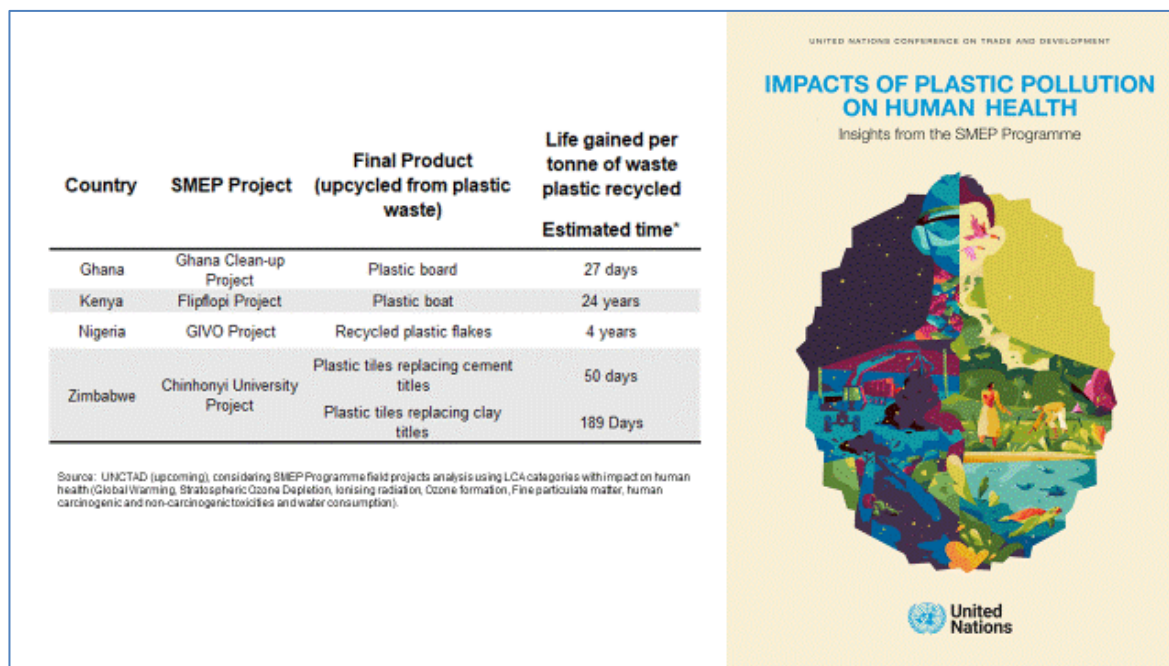



Source: UNCTAD Vivas Eugui & Pacini (2022), UNCTAD, based on presentation on plastic substitutes HS codes, Life-cycle analysis and tariffs considerations. WTO Dialogue on Plastics.

Blurry borders: (e.g. PHA, PHB)
Focus should be on life-cycle / end-of-life performance





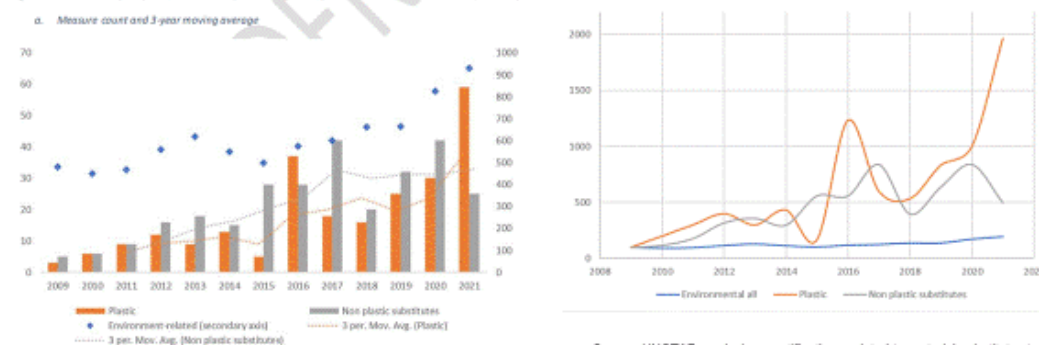
Trade-related policy measures on non-plastic substitutes

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• 243 measures mapped

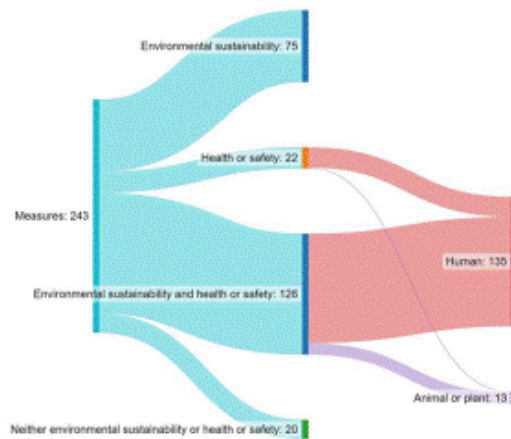
- *Considering wood, pulp and paper, aluminum, glass, and natural fibers such as cotton and bamboo

Figure 1. Trade-related policy measures on non-plastic substitutes, plastic and environment-related (2009-21)



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Objectives of trade-related policy measures on non-plastic substitutes (notified to WTO 2009-2021)



- Substitutes already strongly regulated!

- Measures related to **environmental sustainability linked to human health and safety** stand out!

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Harmonized types of measures on non-plastic substitutes, by development status of notifying member (2009-21), total and percentages

Type of measures	Developed	Developing	LDCs	Total	Developed	Developing	LDCs	Total
Environmental requirements / command-and-control								
Technical regulation or specifications	32	78	30	140	43%	60%	77%	58%
Conformity assessment procedures		16	9	25	0%	12%	23%	10%
Import licences	7	11		18	9%	8%	0%	7%
Ban/Prohibition	5	8		13	7%	6%	0%	5%
Export licences	5	3		8	7%	2%	0%	3%
Risk assessment	1	2		3	1%	2%	0%	1%
Regulation affecting movement or transit	2	1		3	3%	1%	0%	1%
Other environmental requirements		1		1	0%	1%	0%	0%
Price and market based measures					0%	0%	0%	0%
Countervailing measure / investigation	5			5	7%	0%	0%	2%
Safeguard measure / investigation		3		3	0%	2%	0%	1%
Import quotas	1	1		2	1%	1%	0%	1%
Export quotas		1		1	0%	1%	0%	0%
Support measures					0%	0%	0%	0%
Tax concessions	7	3		10	9%	2%	0%	4%
Grants and direct payments	8	1		9	11%	1%	0%	4%
Non-monetary support		1		1	0%	1%	0%	0%
Loans and financing	1			1	1%	0%	0%	0%
Grand Total	74	130	39	243	100%	100%	100%	100%

Control measures: What is the market perception?

		IMPACTS ON PROJECTS (POTENTIAL FUTURE)								
		Measure	The Ghana Clean-up	UoC	FRESHFAC T	CATCHGRE EN	agrimulchf lin	UoQ/GVO	Filipfipi	CUT
Trade / border measures		Import ban / prohibition								
		Tariffs								
		Import quotas								
		Import licenses								
		export bans								
		export quotas								
		Export licenses								
		Export taxes								
		Monetary and economic instruments (tax, fee)								
Internal market measures		Public procurement								
		Subsidies to services								
		Reduction of subsidies to goods								
		Operation licenses (enhancement in future)								
		Labelling (TBT)								
		Investment regulation								
		Services liberalization and regulation								
		Extended producer responsibility								
		Design and quality standards								
		Internal production and commercialization bans of plastic								
		Certification and Conformity assessment								
	Recycling targets									
	Measuring, monitoring and mapping of marine litter									

UNCTAD Future contributions

- Analysis on trade in services for the prevention, management and disposal of plastics
- Mapping marine based plastic substitutes
- Assisting countries in regulation for biodegradables/compostables (with ISO)
- Technical assistance to support countries in developing frontier substitutes and alternatives with low land use / resource impacts: value-addition in agri-residues, seaweed by products (paper and sachets), biodegradable fishing gear



Textile fibres from pineapple and banana leaves



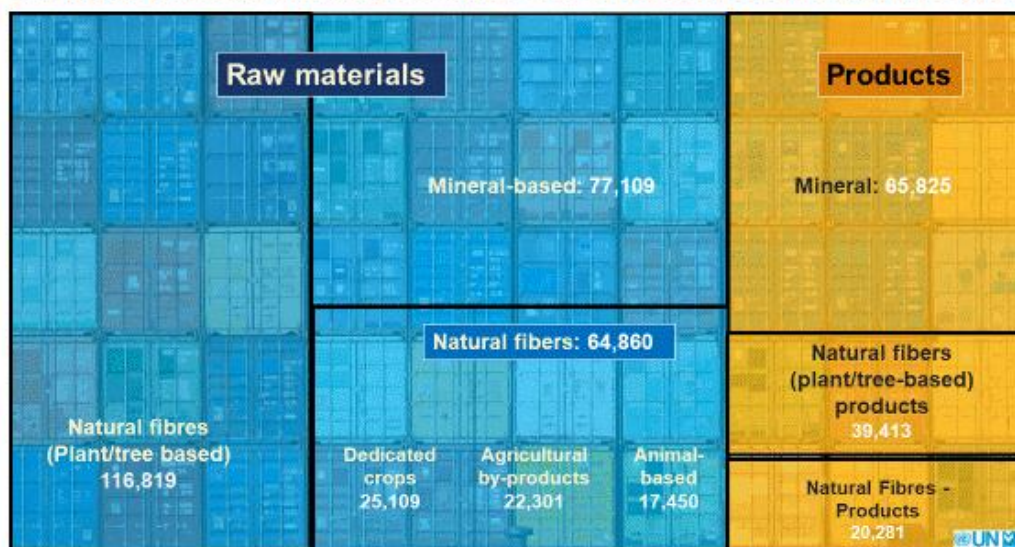
Seaweed production with innovative biodegradable ropes

Thank you
 Merci
 شكرًا لكم
Henrique.Pacini@un.org



Trade value of plastics substitutes

Export in 2020 represented \$388 billion, approximately 2/3 represents exports of raw materials (\$258 billion)



Draft text of INC Process on Non-plastic substitutes (Art.6) & DPP WTO Ministerial Declaration at MC13

6. Non-plastic substitutes

Option 0

No provision on this matter.

Option 1

1. [Subject to its national plan and based upon national circumstances and capabilities, each][Each] Party shall take measures to foster innovation[, including through the cooperation mechanism referred to in [Part III. ...]] and incentivize and promote [the research,] the development and use at scale of safe, environmentally sound, and sustainable non-plastic substitutes, including products, technologies and services, taking into account their potential for [waste reduction and reuse,

INC 4 Draft negotiating document

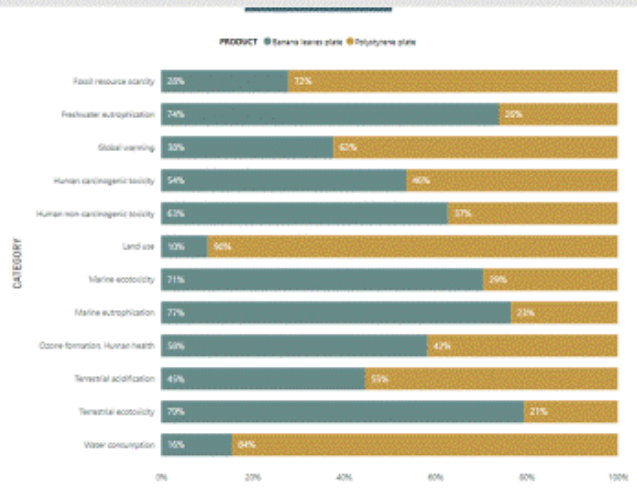
"safe, environmentally sound and sustainable non-plastic substitutes"

- Promote cooperation on trade that contributes to ending plastic pollution, including trade in environmentally sound, safe, and effective non-plastic substitutes taking into account scientific evidence and knowledge; and environmentally sound, safe and effective plastic alternatives; as well as systems to reuse, repair and refill; and services and technologies including for improving transparency, waste management and clean-up activities, in ways that consider the waste hierarchy and are appropriate to local development circumstances and needs, and in line with Basel Convention Technical Guidelines on Environmentally Sound Management of Plastic Wastes.

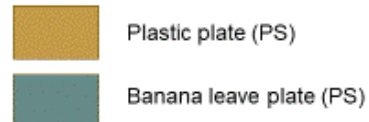
WTO Dialogue on Plastic Pollution / MC13 Statement (adopted)

"...environmentally sound, safe and effective non-plastic substitutes"

Process-based Life Cycle Assessment



Non-plastic substitutes: pros and cons



FCDO-UNCTAD SMEP Programme: Material comparison dashboard.

https://bit.ly/SMEP_UNCTAD

FUNCTIONAL UNIT AND REFERENCE FLOWS			
Functional unit	Plastic product	Substitute product	Unit
"Serving an average meal"	1 Polystyrene plate	1 banana leaves plate	Single use