

Oman's Retail Chains Back Anti-plastic Bag Drive

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MUSCAT - The anti-plastic bag initiative in Oman has received a big boost with nine of the country's leading hypermarket and supermarket chains lending their support to it.

The retailers — Al Fair, Carrefour, Khimji Mart, Lulu, Omanoil Quick Shops, Safeer, Select Stores, Souk Shops and Sultan Centre — signed an agreement with the Environment Society of Oman (ESO) to help reduce the number of plastic grocery bags used in the country.

According to a recent survey, about six million plastic bags are used each month by supermarkets in the capital area alone, and retailers have agreed to reduce the overall environmental impact of their carrier bags starting from January 8.

The move comes in response to a concerted call for action from ESO and its latest 'No To Plastic Bags For Oman' drive.

The active involvement of supermarket chains, society President Sayyida Tania bint Shabib Al Said underlined, would help change consumer behaviour over time and encourage shoppers to keep and reuse the bags for future shopping trips thereby reducing the amount of disposable carrier bags in the months and years ahead.

"We are delighted that supermarkets have responded so positively to ESO's challenge to cut the number of plastic bags. Our partner retail outlets have shown their commitment to our campaign by agreeing to the training of their staff on the best practices of packing bags as well as educating them on impact of plastic bags," she added.

As part of the deal with ESO, supermarkets have agreed to change their policies and not give out plastic bags to shoppers who have three items or less. In addition, check-out operators and packers will soon be asking customers to think twice before they accept plastic bags, and will encourage them to use reusable jute bags instead. Some supermarkets have also agreed to run their own in-store campaigns in the future and provide reusable bags for purchase as an alternative to plastic.

"We realise that creating a change in behaviour is a long process and there are many more steps to take, where full support and participation by the retail sector and general public is needed," Sayyida Sania said, adding: "We want to make it as simple as we can for everyone to take action now. People often want to do their bit, but don't often know where to start; now there's an alternative. What we want everyone to do is to reduce, reuse and refuse plastic bags. If you don't need one - say no.

{ Khaleej Times }