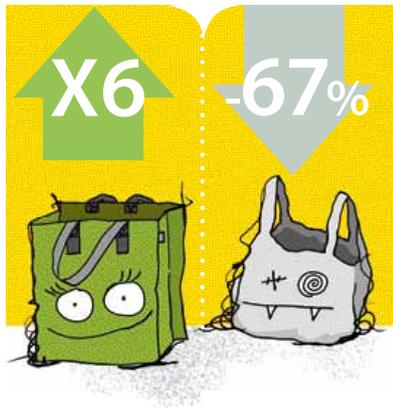


Single-use shopping bags reduced by two-thirds



Belgian Federation of Distributors exceeds target by a wide margin

A campaign launched by the Belgian federation of retailers (Comeos) in 2003 aimed at changing consumer behaviour. The campaign set itself the task of reducing usage of single-use plastic shopping bags. Thanks to the joint efforts of all actors in the distribution sector, usage reduced by 67% in just four years. Many consumers now use reusable bags, boxes, and baskets instead.

'MY REUSABLE BAG AND I, WE ARE INSEPARABLE'

The campaign launched by Comeos was dubbed 'My reusable bag and I, we are inseparable'. Member companies of Comeos committed to reducing the number of single-use shopping bags by 25% between 2003 and 2006 as part of their prevention plan. They also aimed to double the use of reusable alternatives.

..... prevent pack

Results beyond expectations

The outcome of this campaign is extremely gratifying given the fact that the initial targets were vastly exceeded. Between 2003 and 2007, the use of re-usable alternatives increased six-fold while the number of distributed single-use bags dropped by 67%. In total, some 3,500 tons of plastic were saved during these four years as a result of this campaign.

Actively promoting alternatives

What is the reason for this success? The actions implemented by the distribution sector focused on four points:

- **OFFER ALTERNATIVES TO CUSTOMERS.** These alternatives have appeared in various formats: reusable plastic bags, canvas bags for bottles, reusable boxes, foldable boxes, reusable thermal bags, cooling boxes, and caddies.
- **ACTIVELY PROMOTE THESE ALTERNATIVES** through free distribution, additional loyalty points, or increased advertising and visibility, among other approaches.
- **LIMIT THE AVAILABILITY OF SINGLE-USE BAGS.** Certain shops have eliminated these bags altogether. Others have voluntarily placed them out of sight or now charge for single-use bags.
- **INFORM MEMBERS OF STAFF** about the use and prevention of plastic bags.

good to remember

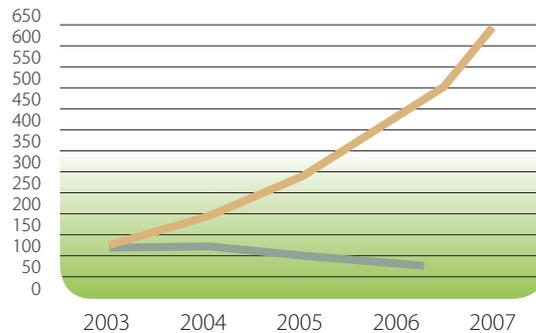
Comeos initiated the campaign 'My reusable bag and I, we are inseparable' which has **reduced** the number of single-use shopping bags by **67%**.

Consumers adapted **gradually to reusable alternatives** such as canvas bags and foldable boxes.

Given the success of the campaign, Comeos subsequently launched a **new action that continued through 2009**.

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The use of reusable bags, boxes, and baskets increased six-fold between 2003 and 2007.



evolution in % of single-use bags and their alternatives.

■ single-use bags
■ reusable alternatives

Adopting new habits

Although the campaign was eventually successful, it took some time for consumers to adapt their habits. Initially, consumers often forgot to bring along the alternative bags that they had purchased during previous visits to a shop. A substantial reduction in the number of single-use bags was observed only after several months. In other words, the information stage was followed by a learning phase before the new habit was gradually adopted.

By lowering the consumption of single-use shopping bags, 3.500 tons of plastic were saved between 2003 and 2007.



Supermarkets account for bulk of the effort

The bulk of the success can be credited to supermarkets. Previously, they were responsible for the distribution of 92,4% of all free single-use shopping bags. In this sector, trips to make purchases are often planned beforehand, which makes it easier for consumers to bring along an alternative solution to single-use bags.

However, there are certain obvious limitations in the food sector. Products such as meat and fish, for instance, require single-use plastic bags to ensure proper hygiene.

The reduction target defined in 2004 was also achieved by the non-food sector, even though fewer alternatives were available.