

## PRESS RELEASE:

### **Scientific Consensus on Chemicals in Food Packaging Leads Environmental and Public Health Groups Around the World to Declare Global Health Threat**

*Groups call for policymakers to protect families' health by phasing out toxic chemicals from food packaging and mandating safe, reusable alternatives*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: March 3, 1:00 am GMT

Today, **nearly 200 environmental and public health organizations** led by the [UNWRAPPED Project](#) (UPSTREAM, Zero Waste Europe, and GAIA) released a Call to Action in response to a just released peer-reviewed [Consensus Statement](#) signed **by 33 world-renowned scientists warning chemicals used in single-use plastic and food packaging represents a significant threat to human and planetary health** - particularly the health of children.

The Consensus statement clearly states the facts:

- Approximately 12,000 chemicals are intentionally used in packaging and other forms of food contact materials
- An enormous body of research - over 1200 studies- shows that these chemicals migrate from packaging into food and beverages
- Amongst those chemicals, many have been proven hazardous for human health: exposure may lead to cancer, heart disease, inflammatory bowel disease, rheumatoid arthritis, genotoxicity, chronic diseases (such as atherosclerosis, cancer, diabetes, cardiovascular diseases), and autoimmune diseases
- Many of these chemicals are never tested for human health effects
- For most of these chemicals, their presence is undisclosed

Many of those chemicals, including phthalates, bisphenols and PFAs, are used in single-use packaging, made of plastic but also paper & board. The lack of disclosure by producers regarding chemicals used in packaging means that the risks associated with the use of those packaging cannot be evaluated. Consumers and regulators aren't the only ones in the dark-- many packaging producers and waste managers are unaware of the chemicals present in the packaging they process, and possibly recycle in other products.

In response, nearly 200 organisations signed a [Call to Action](#), demanding that regulators and industry protect public health and the environment by acting to:

- Ensure that all chemicals used in food packaging are fully traced and disclosed
- Eliminate harmful chemicals in all food packaging and prevent regrettable substitutions
- Adopt policies that support the transition towards safe, reusable, and refillable packaging

The Call to Action is launched globally with dedicated media events in the United States (Click [here](#) to attend the telepresser on March 3, 7am EST) and Asia Pacific (Australia, Malaysia, Nepal, Taiwan, and the Philippines).

**In Asia Pacific, Beau Baconguis, Regional Plastics Campaigner, stated:** "Our communities are a rich resource of traditional materials, practices and systems that worked without exposing the consumer to the toxic chemicals that came with plastic food packaging. We got sidetracked for a few decades by the plastic packaging industry. It's time to reject this plastic packaged food culture and reclaim and, if necessary, update and scaleup on the sensible, safe alternatives we used to have."

**In Europe Justine Maillot, Consumption and Production Campaigner at Zero Waste Europe commented:** "Our current system of production and distribution of food and its packaging puts at risk the health of people, who don't even have access to information on the chemicals present in food packaging. Regulators must take immediate measures to eliminate hazardous chemicals from food packaging, and ensure a transition to make it toxic-free and reusable. This is urgently needed to protect both human health and the environment, and allow a clean circular economy."

**In the U.S., Linda Birnbaum, former Director of the NIEHS and the National Toxicology Program commented:** "Families want to put food on the table that supports their children's health and wellbeing. But it's next to impossible to find options that aren't wrapped in food packaging containing chemicals that represent a significant threat to human health. Current safety evaluations fail to consider impacts of very low dose exposures on the endocrine system and this puts children at the greatest risk of harm."

[Read the Call to Action](#) (spanish and mandarin versions available)

[Read the Scientific Consensus Statement](#)

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## Notes

*GAIA (Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives) is a worldwide alliance of grassroots groups, non-governmental organizations, and individuals whose mission is to catalyze a global shift towards environmental justice by strengthening grassroots social movements that advance solutions to waste and pollution.*

*UPSTREAM works with businesses, schools, and communities to transition to a throw-away-free culture. We have launched campaigns across the country to make single-use history and "indisposable" the new norm.*

*Zero Waste Europe is the European network of communities, local leaders, businesses, experts, and change agents working towards the elimination of waste in our society. We empower communities to redesign their relationship with resources, and to adopt smarter lifestyles and sustainable consumption patterns in line with a circular economy.*