

Mexico February 13, 2023

PRESS RELEASE

The US intensifies plastic waste colonialism in Mexico: exports of plastic waste increase and dirty technologies are transferred.

The US establishes a recycling plant in Mexico where large quantities of water are consumed and water resources are contaminated, in addition to the transfer of tons of garbage from that country to Mexico.

Mexico City, February 13, 2023. The US company Direct Pack Recycling has established a new PET recovery/recycling plant in Mexicali, Baja California for the manufacture of pellets and thermoformed packaging (cups, lids, trays), financed by [The Recycling Partnership coalition](#), which clearly signifies the intensification of colonialism through plastic waste coming from the United States to Mexico.

In addition to the 121% increase in exports of dirty and contaminated plastic waste from the United States to Mexico, starting with the closing of China's borders in 2019, we are now being transferred "recycling" plants with a technology that is no longer accepted in the United States due to its economic unfeasibility, excessive water consumption and high environmental impact. Moreover, such plastics are to supply mainly their U.S. customers.

"It is no coincidence that within the current context of the plastic crisis, the most powerful corporations in the world, such as the beverage, food, petrochemical and consumer goods industries, are those that make up *The Recycling Partnership* coalition, including Coca Cola, Danone, Procter & Gamble, Unilever, Dow, Braskem, Walmart, Eastman, Indorama Ventures, Colgate, ExxonMobil, Nestlé and Pepsico. They are also running contests to finance polluting facilities in Mexico to increase the greenwashing of toxic recycling of single-use plastics," said Marisa Jacott, Director of Fronteras Comunes.

The Mexican company Direct Pack Systems (DPS), also known as Direct Pack Baja, Direct Pack Mexicali or Direct Pack Mexico, pointed that the plant has an [area of 18,580 square meters](#) with a capacity to treat PET of more than 18 million kilograms per year. Based on this capacity, it is estimated that water use at the Mexicali facility could be around 197 million liters of water per year (1.3 gallons of water/pound), at a time when the [Colorado River Basin is suffering the most severe water crisis in its history](#).

There is no accurate current data on the amount of water available for Mexicali's 1.2 million population, but due to interruptions in the water supply, it may be less than the minimum amount recommended by the World Health Organization of 100 liters per person per day. On this per capita basis, the PET recycling plant in Mexicali could use the water required by 5,392 people per day.

"Plastic recycling requires large amounts of fresh water that Mexicali does not have and will generate more PFAS (perfluoroalkylated and polyfluoroalkylated substances) and microplastics contamination in wastewater and we fear that it is the beginning of a migration of more polluting technology due to the public policy promoted by the president of Mexico that [encourages the importation of plastic waste](#) from the northern neighbor, regardless of the environmental and health consequences" said Jose Manuel Arias, Coordinator of the Santo Tomas Ecological Association.

The undersigned environmental organizations point out that recycling has proven not to be the solution to the pollution and crisis generated by toxic plastics and other waste, so we must stop producing single-use plastics and establish Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) policies. In addition, plastic recycling is toxic due to the additives that are added, such as phthalates, among many others for PET, which accumulate in new products.

"The new plastic recycling plant in Mexicali, financed by large corporations, is the clear example of what has been called **garbage imperialism**, by transferring thousands of tons of toxic plastic waste from countries with greater purchasing power and stricter legal frameworks to southern countries with weak regulations and lax environmental authorities. Sending toxic plastic waste to Mexico under the guise of recycling is the perfect opportunity to perpetuate this phenomenon of environmental injustice," stated Larisa de Orbe, Director of Acción Ecológica and Coordinator of the Academia Mexicana de Derecho Ambiental.

"The companies that produce plastics as well as fast-moving consumer goods companies, such as Coca-Cola and Nestlé, must listen to the demands we have been making for years from civil society. They cannot continue to flood our cities with plastics designed to be thrown away, which only contribute to the pollution of ecosystems. We demand that instead of betting on disposable packaging and containers, they should advance in the design of new ways of distributing their products that are reusable and do not generate waste. These companies must take responsibility for their contribution to the plastic pollution crisis we are suffering, they cannot continue to sell us false solutions such as recycling," added Ornela Garelli, Greenpeace Mexico's Oceans Without Plastics Campaigner.

We call on the federal environmental authorities and the government of Baja California and Mexicali not to allow this plant to operate in Mexicali or any other part of the country, since this type of PET thermoforming plant means more pollution, depletion of water resources, an increase in the toxic body burden on human health and ecosystems, as well as an incentive to increase exports of plastic waste from the United States to Mexico.

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