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## From June, shops can't give free plastic bags

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A nationwide campaign against plastic bags has been launched, with the government banning production of ultra-thin bags and forbidding supermarkets and shops from handing out free carriers from June 1.

People use too many of the bags and fail to dispose of them properly, wasting valuable oil used in their production, and littering the country, the State Council said in a notice posted on the central government website (www.gov.cn).

Starting from June, shops, supermarkets and sales outlets will be forbidden from offering free plastic bags and all carriers must be clearly marked with prices.

"We should encourage people to return to carrying cloth bags, using baskets for their vegetables," the notice said.

In addition, the manufacture, sale and use of bags less than 0.025 mm thick are banned from the same date, with firms that flout the rules facing fines or confiscation of goods and profits.

The State Council also:

told finance authorities to consider tax measures to discourage the production and sale of plastic bags and encourage the recycling industry.

told quality inspection authorities to revise State standards for plastic bags and set up a monitoring mechanism.

urged rubbish collectors to separate plastic for reprocessing and reduce the amount burnt or buried.

Residents in the country use up to 3 billion plastic bags a day and the country has to refine 5 million tons (37 million barrels) of crude oil every year to make plastics used for packaging, according to a report on the website of China Trade News (www.chinatradenews.com.cn).

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