

April 9, 2025

Commission welcomes provisional agreement to reduce microplastic pollution from plastic pellets

Key policies: *EU Regulation on preventing microplastic pollution from plastic pellets, EU Plastics Strategy, Circular Economy Action Plan, Zero Pollution Action Plan, EU Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability, Restriction on intentionally added microplastics, EU Biodiversity Strategy*

The **European Commission** has welcomed the **provisional agreement** reached between the **European Parliament** and the **Council of the European Union** on new rules to **prevent microplastic pollution from plastic pellets** across the entire value chain, including transport and maritime activities.

The new Regulation aims to **significantly reduce plastic pellet losses**, protect ecosystems and biodiversity, and safeguard human health, while ensuring that European industry can continue to operate and grow sustainably.

Tackling a major source of microplastic pollution

Plastic pellets — the raw material used to manufacture plastic products — are frequently lost during handling and transport due to inadequate practices. These losses often end up in the environment, including rivers, coastal areas and seas, as demonstrated by recent incidents along the **North-West coast of Spain** and in the **North Sea**.

The agreed rules are expected to **reduce pellet losses by up to 74%**, delivering environmental benefits while also improving the reputation and sustainability of the plastics sector. This will have positive knock-on effects for economic sectors such as **agriculture, aquaculture and tourism**.

Proportionate rules for businesses

To limit administrative burden, especially for smaller operators, the Commission successfully advocated for a **tiered compliance approach**:

- Companies handling **more than 1,500 tonnes of plastic pellets per year** will be subject to certification requirements
- Companies below this threshold will only need to provide a **self-declaration**
- **Micro and small enterprises** will benefit from lighter requirements and targeted assistance

This ensures environmental protection while maintaining fairness and proportionality.

Preventing, containing and cleaning up pellet losses

The Regulation introduces **mandatory best handling practices** for economic operators and carriers, based on industry standards. These include:

- Ensuring high-quality, non-leaking packaging
- Immediate withdrawal of damaged or sifting packaging

- Use of **spill containment devices**, such as spill trays
- Effective clean-up measures, including **vacuum cleaners with sufficient capacity**

The responsibility for preventing pollution will rest with operators, rather than local communities who currently bear the burden of clean-up efforts.

Monitoring and standardisation

European standardisation bodies will develop a **harmonised methodology** to help operators and carriers:

- Monitor pellet losses
- Address data gaps
- Improve transparency and accountability

This will also raise awareness of the environmental and health impacts of different operational practices.

Next steps

The European Parliament and the Council must now **formally adopt the Regulation**. Once adopted, it will enter into force **20 days after publication** in the Official Journal of the EU.

Background

Microplastic pollution has been identified as a major environmental challenge under several EU policy frameworks, including:

- The **EU Plastics Strategy**
- The **Circular Economy Action Plan**
- The **Zero Pollution Action Plan**

EU action on microplastics follows a **three-pronged approach**:

1. Reducing pollution from plastic products as they degrade
2. Restricting **intentionally added microplastics** (rules adopted on 25 September 2023)
3. Reducing **unintentional releases**, including plastic pellets

Together, these measures support the EU objective of **reducing microplastics releases into the environment by 30% by 2030**, as set out in the Zero Pollution Action Plan.

Source: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_25_1023