

Hauptprüfung 2018/2019	Berufliches Gymnasium (AG, BTG, EG, SGG, TG, WG)
2.2	Englisch

Supermarkets must stop using plastic packaging, says former *Asda*¹ boss

The former boss of *Asda* is calling for supermarkets to stop using plastic packaging, saying billions of pounds of investment in recycling have failed to resolve the world's plastic proliferation crisis.

5 Andy Clarke, CEO of one of Britain's biggest supermarket chains for six years, said the only solution was for retailers to reject plastic entirely in favour of more sustainable alternatives like paper, steel, glass and aluminium.

10 "Go into any supermarket in the country and you will be met by a wall of plastic," Clarke said. "Be it fruit and veg or meat and dairy, plastic encases virtually everything we buy. Regardless of how much is invested in Britain's recycling infrastructure, virtually all plastic packaging will reach landfills or the bottom of the ocean sooner or later. Once there, it will remain on the earth for centuries. It is vital that the UK packaging industry and supermarkets work together to turn off the tap."

15 Efforts to recycle more plastic and "a never-ending stream of initiatives" – many of which Clarke oversaw while at *Asda* – have failed to stem the plastic flow and it is clear a more radical approach is needed, said Clarke, who stood down as *Asda* CEO last year.

"We want a future for our grandchildren which is as far as possible plastic-free," he said. "We also know that consumers want the same thing and with heightened public awareness of the dire consequences of unfettered plastic pollution, they are fully in support of the industry's efforts to make a meaningful change."

20 Clarke said supermarkets should create plastic-free aisles to cater for their customers' demands and to showcase the wealth of alternatives to plastic including innovations like grass paper. He also backed the campaign *A Plastic Planet* as a measure to spread the use of alternative packaging.

25 The world's plastic binge shows no signs of halting. A *Guardian* investigation this year established that consumers around the world buy a million plastic bottles a minute and plastic production is set to double in the next 20 years and quadruple by 2050.

30 In the UK less than a third (29%) of the 5 million tonnes of plastic used each year is recovered and recycled. Across the world more than 8 million tonnes of plastic leak into the oceans and a recent study found that billions of people globally are drinking water contaminated by plastic.

Clarke said he has witnessed how much supermarkets have done to try to promote recycling, investing billions to try to increase the amount of recycled plastic they use, but still these measures have failed to reduce the scale of plastic pollution.

35 Attempts to use thinner plastic milk bottles containing more recycled material at *Asda*, he said, led to bottles bursting and creating more food waste. In the end the supermarket went back to the original bottles.

"Unlike materials like aluminium and glass, plastic packaging cannot be recycled endlessly. Most items of plastic packaging can only be recycled twice before they become unusable," he said.

40 Clarke highlighted a *Populus* poll from earlier this year which showed four out of five people questioned were concerned about the amount of plastic packaging thrown away in the UK and 91% wanted plastic-free aisles in supermarkets.

¹ *Asda* = a British supermarket chain

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45 He called for *Asda* and other supermarkets to use the large number of new products coming onto the market to cut plastic pollution. "Despite more than a decade of concerted supermarket action on this issue, globally we are still dumping in excess of 8 million tonnes of plastic in the ocean each year," said Clarke.

50 "We have been able to recycle plastic for decades, yet it remains a scourge on the planet. Recycling will never offer a durable solution to the plastic crisis – we simply have to use less plastic in the first place."

Greenpeace oceans campaigner Tisha Brown said: "With ocean plastic pollution ending up in everything from sea salt to sea gulls to our seafood, and many shoppers frustrated with the amount of unnecessary plastic packaging they encounter at their local supermarket, now would be a very good time for *Asda*, or any supermarket, to give shoppers the option of opting out. The great thing about a plastic-free aisle is that it could encourage innovation in the packaging of many different products, and save environmentally minded consumers the hassle of hunting for environmentally friendly choices across the store."

55 Between 5 and 13 million tonnes of plastic leak into the world's oceans each year to be ingested by sea birds, fish and other organisms, and by 2050 the ocean will contain more plastic by weight than fish, according to research by the *Ellen MacArthur Foundation*.

60 Scientists at Ghent University in Belgium recently calculated people who eat seafood ingest up to 11,000 tiny pieces of plastic every year. Last August, the results of a study by Plymouth University reported plastic was found in a third of UK-caught fish, including cod, haddock, mackerel and shellfish.