



Week 3: Household

Fact Sheet Challenge B: Avoid disposable items in the kitchen this week.

Reusable instead of disposable! This statement is ecologically justifiable in almost all areas, if these reusable products are actually used several times. The basis of this comparison lies in materials, production costs, transport routes, useful life, degradability or recycling, i.e. in the entire value-added chain of a product.

First example: Plastics are made from crude oil, among other things, and glass consists mainly of molten sand. Both materials are water-repellent, but glass is much heavier and more fragile, but more heat-resistant than the light, flexible plastic. Both can be recycled, but the recycling rate for plastics in Germany is just at 15.6%, for glass it's at 83.6%. So there is no clear ecological decision here, but only a tendency under the given circumstances.

It is not only about packaging (see Challenge Week 2), but also about objects of daily use that can be found in the household, especially in the kitchen, such as sponges, filters, straws, etc. These utensils can be reused several times without any problems and also create a sustainable impression due to their aesthetic material. Before purchasing such products, research should also be conducted into what the value chain looks like.

Second example: Dishwashing brushes are partly made of plastic, rubber and synthetic bristles. The more sustainable alternative is a dishwashing brush made of wood and metal with natural bristles. In order for this to be truly more ecological than the production of disposable plastic articles, it must be used over a certain period of time (which varies depending on the material). With most wooden dishwashing brushes the head is changeable, which makes a continuous use of the handle possible.

Third example: Baking paper is an essential companion in the kitchen and consists of a paper layer and a second sealing layer of either a complex of chromium(III) salts and fatty acids or fluorocarbon compounds. It is therefore not designed to be used several times. Alternatives are baking mats that can be washed by hand or in the dishwasher and reused undamaged. However, the main components are silicone (rarely recycled plastic) and Teflon (rarely recycled fiberglass mesh), although it has not yet been sufficiently researched what kind of vapors these materials emit at high temperatures.

Sustainability always means taking care of one's own health too and avoiding not only packaging waste but also toxic substances. Therefore, intensive research in advance is helpful.





What you can do:

- Look around your kitchen and look for disposable items. Before you reach for new products, make sure to check what is still functional and use it up!
- Find out about sustainable kitchen and everyday aids, how they can be integrated into your everyday life and, above all, what alternative materials are used in their manufacture.
- Here are some tips for reusable products: Beeswax cloth instead of cling film, cotton filter instead of paper filter, cloth napkins instead of paper napkins, glass straws instead of plastic straws, natural fiber sponges instead of plastic sponges...

Bonuschallenge: Look out for sustainable gifts and packaging for this year's christmas and advent calendars.

Sources:

Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung/ BUND (2019). *Plastikatlas. Daten und Fakten über eine Welt voller Kunststoff.*

<https://www.umweltbundesamt.de/daten/ressourcen-abfall/verwertung-entsorgung-ausgewaehlter-abfallarten/glas-altglas#altglassammlung-mit-tradition>

<https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Backpapier>

<https://www.smarticular.net/backpapier-alternativen-ersatz-oekologisch-mehrweg/>



Ein Projekt des Beyond Borders e.V.
Weißburger Str. 10, 22049 Hamburg
info@beyond-borders-ev.de
<https://beyond-borders-ev.de/de/>

all rights reserved