

PRESS RELEASE – STRICTLY EMBARGOED UNTIL 00:01 16 SEPTEMBER

ICELAND FOODS AND UK’S LEADING CAMPAIGNERS CALL ON GOVERNMENT AND UK BUSINESSES TO COMMIT TO TRANSPARENT PLASTIC PACKAGING REPORTING AND PLASTIC POLLUTION REDUCTION TARGETS

- Iceland has joined forces with Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace, A Plastic Planet and Surfers Against Sewage to call for the retail and wider business sector to commit to enhanced transparency in reporting on plastic consumption
- The Government is also being called on to enforce mandatory reporting on plastic packaging and plastic pollution reduction targets within forthcoming legislation to ensure that real progress is being delivered
- Iceland has today published its own plastic footprint, amounting to over 32,000 tonnes across its UK and international operations in 2019, and will continue to publish on an annual basis

16th September, 2020 – Iceland is today calling on the retail and wider business sector to become more transparent in their reporting of plastic packaging, as the supermarket continues to lead the way in the fight against plastic pollution.

Four of the most influential campaigners on this issue – Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace, A Plastic Planet, and Surfers Against Sewage – are joining forces with Iceland to call for greater transparency.

The call for transparency is also supported by the Environmental Investigation Agency, which together with Greenpeace produces an annual survey on plastic usage by supermarkets, and by Keep Britain Tidy and international development charity Tearfund.

Richard Walker, Managing Director of Iceland, said: “Our message is clear. Without transparency, and government enforced reduction targets, we will not be able to judge whether business actions are delivering real progress. That is why today Iceland is calling on retailers and other businesses to step up and commit to publishing their total plastic packaging transparently, including both own label and branded products. For several years now, businesses have been using incomplete information to represent the scale of their plastic packaging, their commitments to change, and the progress being made. We will all be better served by a more accurate and transparent picture on this issue.

“What we are asking from all major retailers and businesses is straightforward as they are already subject to PRN¹ reporting and will be in the future to the Government’s planned EPR² scheme, so this will require no extra costs or resources.

“We have a huge challenge ahead that can only be solved by businesses and policy makers working together, in tandem with fully informed consumers sharing a completely clear picture of both the country and individual businesses’ total plastic packaging. Increased recycling is

¹ Packaging Recovery Notes form a key part of the Producer Responsibility Obligations Regulations 2007 and are certificates of evidence that prove a tonne of packaging waste has been recovered and reprocessed or exported. They apply to businesses using more than 50 tonnes of packaging or with a turnover greater than £2million.

² The Government intends to introduce new Extended Producer Responsibility systems using primary powers in the Environment Bill.

important but won't solve the issue on its own. Regulated commitments to reduce plastic pollution are also vital if we are to deliver positive progress in the face of the sheer scale of plastic making its way into the environment."

When Iceland made its commitment on own label plastic packaging in 2018, it promised to provide regular updates to its customers along its journey, and it is now once again leading the way by proactively publishing its full plastic footprint.

Since Iceland made its commitment to eliminate all plastic packaging from its own label products by the end of 2023, it has made significant progress in reducing the plastic it uses. In total it had removed 3,794 tonnes out of the 13,000 tonnes the business was using in January 2018 by the end of 2019 – equating to a 29% reduction.

The figures released today include Iceland's primary packaging along with the secondary and tertiary packaging used to deliver food to its stores, alongside the packaging for the brands it sells, with figures reported separately for its UK and international businesses. They reveal that Iceland's total plastic packaging footprint for its UK and international operations is over 32,000 tonnes and includes more than 1.8 billion items of packaging and almost 93 million plastic bottles.

"Our figures show that two thirds of the plastic packaging we sell relates to brands rather than own label. When we made our commitment to eliminate plastic from our own label products by the end of 2023, we were aware that we would have to take further steps to lead the way in the fight against the scourge of plastic. That is why as well as calling on fellow retailers, businesses and the Government, we are also publishing our first plastic packaging footprint to reflect both our impact and the challenge that lies ahead. We can only solve this crisis by working together," Richard Walker added.

Tony Bosworth, Friends of the Earth campaigner, said: "This initiative is an important development in the drive to slash plastic pollution.

"You can't manage what you don't measure. Many corporate ambitions for reducing plastic waste may sound impressive, but unless they are clear about how much they're responsible for in the first place these can be fairly meaningless.

"Ministers must listen to the growing calls for serious action on the plastic crisis by ensuring that bold targets for reducing plastic pollution and waste are included in the Environment Bill."

Greenpeace UK plastic campaigner Nina Schrank said: "There's nothing like transparency about a problem to force companies to tackle it, and that's true of throwaway plastic too. Iceland has made a bold and brave move by publishing their plastic data, and we urge other retailers to follow suit. If UK supermarkets are underreporting their packaging, ocean plastic pollution could be far worse than we thought and wildlife could be even more at risk.

"UK supermarkets are starting to cut the amount of single-use plastic packaging they produce, but we need them to move faster and think bigger. The government can make a big difference by setting legally-binding targets, pushing retailers to cut their plastic packaging in half by 2025. Supermarkets can do it, they should do it, and the government ought to be watching to make sure that they all do it."

A Plastic Planet co-founder Sian Sutherland said: "To quote Peter Drucker, 'If you can't measure it, you can't improve it'. For years UK supermarkets have been hiding behind half-truths and incomplete data, never fully disclosing the enormous scale of the plastic within their own businesses.

"This bold move by Iceland must quickly be adopted by all UK retailers. If the retailers use their collective might, the brands will soon have to follow and we will finally see some real plastic reduction rather than yet more pacts and pledges. Should retailers not volunteer to do the right thing now, Whitehall must move quickly to make transparent plastic reporting a legal requirement."

Hugo Tagholm, CEO, Surfers Against Sewage, said: "Surfers Against Sewage believes that setting plastic pollution reduction targets in the Environment Bill will help drive the action required at individual, business and community level to stem the plastic tide. We urgently need measures that correspond with these targets, including transparent reporting from all businesses, plastic bans, reuse incentives and a deposit return system on plastic bottles. We have a once in a generation opportunity to deliver world-beating legislation to end plastic pollution once and for all.

For further information on Iceland's plastic consumption figures to date, please visit sustainability.iceland.co.uk.

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For further information, please contact:

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Spokespeople available for comment:

- Richard Walker, Managing Director, Iceland
- Tony Bosworth, Campaigner at Friends of the Earth
- Nina Schrank, Plastic Campaigner, Greenpeace UK
- Sian Sutherland, Co-Founder, A Plastic Planet
- Hugo Tagholm, CEO, Surfers Against Sewage

Please refer to contact details above.

Notes to editors

Background on the Plastic Coalition

In order to stop this flow of plastic into the environment Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace and Surfers Against Sewage in coalition with Keep Britain Tidy, Tearfund and others, are calling on the Government to set, through the Environment Bill, ambitious legally binding targets for the elimination of plastic pollution, and to bring about an end to the sale, use and production of non-essential single-use plastic products.

In order to ensure this and future governments set and deliver on robust, fair, sustainable and evidence-based plastic pollution and waste targets the coalition is calling for the ambitious target setting framework and specifically defined targets within the Plastic Pollution Bill to be incorporated into the Environment Bill.

[The Plastic Pollution Bill](#) is a draft law prepared by the coalition and is based on the Climate Change Act. The Bill provides the gold standard for how plastic pollution elimination targets should be set and offers guidance on how to meet them to stop plastics from contaminating our precious green spaces and flowing into our rivers and the ocean. The Bill would also require the government to consult and follow the advice of an independent expert committee to ensure plastic reduction is not achieved by replacing plastic with other equally environmentally damaging materials, or in ways that impact already marginalised communities. The bill calls for the elimination of the use of all non-essential single use items by 2025 and to prevent plastic pollution altogether by 2042. In addition, it encourages a "reduce and reuse economy" as a sustainable and progressive alternative to the current throw-away economy, which is a key contributing factor to climate change. The coalition is also calling for a specific target for the reduction of all single-use plastic packing by 50% by 2025.

In 2019 a YouGov poll* for Friends of the Earth showed:

- 89% support a law to significantly reduce plastic waste and pollution within 25 years - with 61% expressing strong support
- 88% support a law to ensure manufacturers and retailers phase out all non-essential single-use plastic by 2025 - with 60% expressing strong support
- 89% think manufacturers should do more to cut down on plastic, with 86% thinking retailers, such as supermarkets should be doing more.

*(*YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 1,913 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 17th - 19th February 2019. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all UK adults.)*

Additional notes

- The announcement outlined above represents an initial step in enhanced reporting on plastic packaging reduction
- A natural next step will involve reporting on all packaging, and Iceland is working on internal processes and metrics which will support this, in line with its commitment to reduce overall packaging by 10% by the end of 2023.
- Iceland currently represents 2.5% of the UK grocery market

ABOUT ICELAND

Iceland is recognised as the UK's leader in frozen food and operates over 950 stores across the country, together with a multi-award-winning online shopping service. It represents 2.5% of the UK grocery market. It prides itself on being a convenient and friendly place to do the family's weekly shop, as well as meet everyone's daily top-up shopping needs for fresh, chilled, frozen food and groceries. For more than 20 years Iceland has also offered a unique, free home delivery service for in-store purchases.

Iceland has won multiple awards for the quality of its food and service. Recent honours including being named Best Online Retailer and Best Frozen Food Retailer at the Retail Industry Awards 2018, Community Retailer of the Year at the Retail Week Awards 2018, Online Retailer of the Year at the IGD Awards 2017, and Online Supermarket of the Year at the Grocer Gold Awards 2017. Iceland's online shopping service was also named the UK's best in the 2016, 2017 and 2018 Which? supermarket surveys. Iceland has ranked as one of the UK's Best Big Companies to Work For in each of the last 12 years and was number one in both 2012 and 2014. Iceland was also named best UK supermarket for customer service in the 2018 and 2019 UK Customer Satisfaction Index.

Since 1970, Iceland has been proudly demonstrating to shoppers just how the Power of Frozen can deliver an extensive choice of high quality, great-tasting food from fine sources around the world at great value prices, while naturally generating low levels of food waste.

Research conducted by Manchester Metropolitan University suggested that switching to frozen food can reduce household food bills by as much as £1500 a year.

Always committed to doing the right thing for customers, communities and the environment, Iceland was a pioneer in removing artificial colours, flavours and nonessential preservatives from its own label food in the 1980s, and in banning genetically modified ingredients in the 1990s. In 2018 it committed to becoming the first major retailer, globally, to eliminate plastic packaging from all of its own label products by the end of 2023, and to remove palm oil as an ingredient from its own label range by the end of 2018.