

## PRESS RELEASE

### ICELAND AIMS TO BE PLASTIC-FREE ACROSS OWN LABEL RANGE BY 2023

**TUESDAY 16 JANUARY, 2018** - Iceland, the UK's leading frozen food specialist, is committing to become the first major retailer globally to eliminate plastic packaging from all of its own brand products by the end of 2023. The process starts now and Iceland is challenging itself to complete it within the next five years.

Iceland's pledge will be an important step towards cutting down on the 1 million tonnes<sup>1</sup> of plastic generated by supermarkets in the UK each year. In its place, Iceland will be harnessing the latest technologies to create a range of packaging comprising paper and pulp trays along with paper bags which are fully recyclable through domestic waste collection or in-store recycling facilities, and therefore less harmful to the environment.

**The continuing defence of current plastic packaging does not resonate with the consumer and general public opinion. In a survey of 5,000 UK consumers<sup>2</sup>:**

- 80% would endorse a supermarket's move to go plastic-free
- As a result of a supermarket's plastic-free stance, 91% would be more likely to encourage friends and family to shop there
- Nearly 68% think that other supermarkets should follow this lead

Iceland has already removed plastic disposable straws from its own label range. And its new food ranges, which are set to hit the shelves in early 2018, will feature paper-based rather than plastic food trays.

The supermarket will be providing regular updates on key milestones during the next five years as it transitions to plastic-free packaging.

Iceland Managing Director, Richard Walker, a passionate advocate of environmental awareness and sustainability, is driving this initiative to demonstrate the potential for the entire supermarket retail sector to go plastic-free as far as possible.

**Richard Walker comments:** *"The world has woken up to the scourge of plastics. A truckload is entering our oceans every minute<sup>3</sup>, causing untold damage to our marine environment and ultimately humanity – since we all depend on the oceans for our survival.*

*"The onus is on retailers, as leading contributors to plastic packaging pollution and waste, to take a stand and deliver meaningful change. Other supermarkets, and the retail industry as a whole, should follow suit and offer similar commitments during 2018. This is a time for collaboration.*

*"There really is no excuse any more for excessive packaging that creates needless waste and damages our environment. The technologies and practicalities to create less environmentally harmful alternatives exist, and so Iceland is putting a stake in the ground.*

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<sup>1</sup> WRAP report – Plastics Market Situation Report Spring 2016 – page 6

<sup>2</sup> Survey of consumer attitudes to plastic, conducted by OnePoll - 5,000 UK Adults, online and mobile polling, 21-27 December 2017

<sup>3</sup> 12 million tonnes a year <https://www.greenpeace.org.uk/what-we-do/oceans/plastics/> equates to 22 tonnes a minute, hence a 'truckload'.

# Iceland

*"In tandem, we will also ensure that all our packaging is fully recyclable and that it is actually recycled, through our support for initiatives such as a bottle Deposit Return Scheme.*

*"We are working closely with our supportive own label suppliers to ensure this pledge becomes a reality, and we'll be providing regular updates to customers on our progress in the months to come."*

**Throughout the process, Iceland has consulted regularly with Greenpeace experts. They have called on competitors to follow Iceland's lead. John Sauven, Greenpeace Executive Director, commented:** *"Last month a long list of former heads of Britain's biggest retail groups wrote a joint statement to explain that the only solution to plastic pollution was for retailers to reject plastic entirely in favour of more sustainable alternatives like recycled paper, steel, glass and aluminium. Now Iceland has taken up that challenge with its bold pledge to go plastic free within five years. It's now up to other retailers and food producers to respond to that challenge. The tidal wave of plastic pollution will only start to recede when they turn off the tap. They know the scale of systemic change we need, and yet their responses have been timid and piecemeal. Iceland has offered a more radical solution that shows the way forward for the sector."*

It is estimated more than 12 million tonnes of plastic enters the world's oceans every year<sup>4</sup>, putting the lives of all forms of marine life at risk, from larger animals through to plankton, and there are fears that toxins originating from plastics are then re-entering the food chain via seafood. Plastic also creates a significant recycling issue – statistics suggest only a third of plastics are recycled in the UK<sup>5</sup> – the remainder either ends up in landfill, incinerated or is discarded illegally.

Iceland, which announced in November last year that it is supporting Greenpeace's call to the Government to adopt the Deposit Return Scheme for bottles, has a long history of campaigning and leading positive change for the environment, being the first UK supermarket to remove artificial flavours and colours from its own label products, and a world leader in banning GM ingredients.

**Ends**

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## NOTES TO EDITORS

### ABOUT ICELAND

Iceland is recognised as the leader in frozen food with 900 stores in the UK. The company prides itself on being a convenient and friendly place to do the family's weekly shop, as well as to meet everyone's daily top-up shopping needs for fresh, chilled and frozen food and groceries. Iceland's nationwide online shopping service was named the UK's best in the 2016 and 2017 Which? supermarket surveys, and for 20 years Iceland has offered a unique, free home delivery service for in-store purchases.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.greenpeace.org.uk/what-we-do/oceans/plastics>

<sup>5</sup> The Guardian, 21st November 2016: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2016/nov/21/only-a-third-of-uk-consumer-plastic-packaging-is-recycled>

# Iceland

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.

With the Power of Frozen at its heart, Iceland naturally generates low levels of food waste. The company is also known as a pioneer in removing artificial colours, flavours and non-essential preservatives from its own label products. It has ranked as one of the UK's Best Big Companies to Work For in each of the last 11 years, and was number one in both 2012 and 2014.