



Activity 32: How is my food packaged?

Which of the following materials is used to make sustainable, compostable disposable tableware?

- ☐ COFFEE
- ☐ PLASTIC
- ☐ SUGAR CANE
- ☐ METAL

Is it true that straws are a major polluter for our environment?

- ☐ YES
- ☐ NO

In which European countries is disposable plastic tableware already banned?

- ☐ THE NETHERLANDS
- ☐ CROATIA
- ☐ THE WHOLE OF THE EU
- ☐ GERMANY

How many kilograms of household waste (much of it food packaging) do you estimate each EU citizen produces on average per year?

_____ kgs

How many years does it take for a plastic fork to decompose or break down?

- ☐ 1 YEAR
- ☐ 200 YEARS
- ☐ 800 YEARS





Solution sheet

It has been known for many years that plastic is a problem for the environment if it is not recycled properly. The problem lies in its longevity, which means that it is left in nature and becomes the undoing of animals, among other things. That is why experts have been researching for many years to find suitable alternative materials that are available in large quantities, easily degradable and therefore sustainable. Two of these materials are coffee and sugar cane.

**Coffee & Sugar
cane**

The straw is a popular symbol of pollution and banning it - if it is made of plastic - has been hailed as an important step on the part of politicians. In fact, straws account for only about one per cent of plastic waste in the oceans.

No

A ban on the use of single-use plastic has been in place across the EU since 2021.

EU-wide

On average, each EU citizen produced 582kg of household waste in 2019, but there are big differences between EU countries, with some producing much more and others much less.

**582 kgs / person
in 2019**

Since plastic is not compostable, it only breaks down under the influence of sunlight and CO₂. Under good conditions, the plastic fork then takes about 200 years to degrade. However, since waste is often buried in holes under the ground, so-called landfills, the plastic fork can theoretically last forever.

200 years