

**BAN ON PLASTIC STRAW FROM JULY 1**

# Lack of infra for alternative; delay ban on plastic by six months, say firms

**Currently with no sustainable alternative to plastic available, companies are importing products, driving up costs**

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**A RECENT BAN** on single-use plastic effective from July 1 is likely to challenge food and beverage companies. An alternative like a paper straw will fetch a cost higher than an affordable price offered as of now by different brands. Brands feel the integrated plastic straws come as part of juice and milk-

based drink packs and do not contribute much to plastic pollution as they are part of the recycling and processing chain already put in place by companies which is part of their EPR mandate. With no sustainable alternative for integrated plastic straws available today, Dabur India is working to import paper straws. Importing would have cost implications on companies and lead to loss of revenue to the government exchequer. "It goes against the nature of Atmanirbhar Bharat and puts additional cost strain on companies during these inflationary times. Some state regulators have permitted use of biodegradable plastic straws and paper straws, the infrastructure for producing these straws at scale is non-existent in India today," says Mohit Malhotra, chief executive officer, Dabur India which will soon launch shampoo refill pouches to reduce plastic in packaging.

## Brands on plastic ban

■ With no alternative to plastic straws, Dabur India is working on importing paper straws

■ Parle Agro says postponing ban by six months will allow packaging companies to build the right infrastructure needed to source locally

■ Mother Dairy started plastic waste collection and recycling/co-processing initiative in FY2018-19

This fiscal, the brand had launched carton-free toothpaste packaging. Beverage player Parle Agro

that makes brands like Frooti, Appy, Appy Fizz, B-Fizz, SMOODH, Bailley, Frio, Dhishoom and Bombay 99, has urged the Centre to postpone plastic ban by six months to make the necessary changes in technology, and sourcing, ensure smooth transition to environment friendly options of Paper or PLA. The brand said the current available capacity to provide a replacement of plastic straws with PLA straws or paper straws by a local Indian manufacturer is 1.3 million straws per day as opposed to the actual requirement of approximately 6 million straws per day, and the hasty ban will negatively impact the industry and overall businesses of numerous players in the FMCG and beverage segment. Importing straws will be 6 to 8 times more expensive making the cost of the product unaffordable. For Parle Agro, 50% of the company's turnover

is from rural markets as their products are priced to cater to consumers across India. Price rise will lead to a fall in demand and affect sales.

"The postponement will allow packaging companies to build the right infrastructure needed to source locally. Even getting approvals from regulatory bodies after appropriate testing to manufacture PLA straws will require time," says Schauna Chauhan, CEO, Parle Agro, sharing the percentage increase in cost from plastic to PLA is approximately 122% but if companies were to import the straws, the cost goes up by 259% and 278% for PLA and paper straws respectively. Brands like Mother Dairy have taken a conscious call of limiting plastic usage. There have been no plastic spoons and loose straws for the past three years. "The brand has replaced all plastic spoons with wooden spoons

and will replace the currently available straws with carton straws which are under the implementation phase. We began the plastic waste collection and recycling/co-processing initiative in FY2018-19," says Manish Bandlish, managing director, Mother Dairy Fruit & Vegetable. To address the challenge of restrictions on use of plastic straws, Asepto, the liquid packaging brand of UFlex Limited, UFlex Limited, flexible packaging material solution and polymer science company will start manufacturing U-shaped paper straw for aseptic liquid packaging business. The manufacturing line is being set up at aseptic liquid packaging plant in Sanand, Gujarat. The paper straw manufacturing line will offer a production capacity of approx 2.4 billion straws annually utilised for portion packs for juices and other beverages.