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Single-use plastic bag policies in the Southern African development community

Joana Bezerra, Tony Robert Walker, C. Andrea Clayton, Issahaku Adam

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Abstract

The growing visibility of plastic pollution, particularly negative environmental impacts of single-use plastic bags, has entered the political debate, triggering policy interventions to control its manufacturing and use. This trend was also felt in Southern Africa, a region with high urbanization, leading to increased resource use and plastic consumption, heavily reliant on tourism, an industry highly impacted by plastic pollution. This paper reviews existing single-use plastic bag reduction policies in the Southern African Development Community (SADC). All 16 SADC members have announced a plastic bag reduction policy, but interventions vary in stages of implementation. Waste management emerged as the most important policy driver and over 55% of SADC members adopted a top-down approach in developing these policies to address these environmental challenges. Most SADC members with existing policies did not conduct public awareness campaigns, raising effectiveness issues. Further research on effective plastic bag reduction policy development, enforcement and monitoring would address an important knowledge gap.

Keywords: single-use plastic bags, plastic pollution, Southern African Development Community, waste management

Full text

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