

## STORES OFFERING BULK PRODUCTS TO REDUCE PLASTIC POLLUTION WORLDWIDE

One of the practices that is rapidly spreading in many countries of the world to reduce the single-use plastic packaging for food distribution is the opening of stores that offer bulk products.

Before the industry offered supermarkets and shops the products in specific quantities and packed with plastic materials, consumers were used to buy the quantities they needed, bringing their own containers to take home the purchased goods. Today the bulk stores offer again their products in large volume containers, recovering practices already commonly adopted.

Bulk stores can offer a large quantity of products: fresh food, dried fruits, nuts and seeds, spices and seasonings, cereals, grains, legumes, rice, wines, cosmetics, soaps, detergents, and many others.

The re-launch of these practices started more than a decade ago and have since then spread globally, together with an ever-greater awareness in our societies of the need to adapt lifestyles to a greater respect for the environment. In particular, the global campaigns of recent years to ban the plastic waste that pollutes territories, rivers and oceans around the world have influenced public opinion, favoring the spread of practices inspired by values of ecology and environmental sustainability.

Packaging waste is a problem worldwide. The book published in 2018 by [UN Environment \*Single-use plastics. A Roadmap for Sustainability\*](#) presents an overview of the problem posed by waste from single-use plastic in the environment. According to this study since the 1950s the production of plastic has outpaced that of almost every other material and plastic packaging accounts for about half of the plastic waste in the world. Only 9% of the nine billion tonnes of plastic the world has ever produced has been recycled.

In this global context, the bulk stores have the following environmental and economic advantages:

- they help reduce the plastic commonly used in packaging and they are more respectful of environmental sustainability. The products are typically packaged in large generic bulk containers for grocery outlets, using less natural resources and significantly reducing the plastic waste generated by consumers.





- they simultaneously contribute to reduce food waste at homes, allowing consumers to purchase the quantities actually needed and consumable before their expiration. In this way they generate savings for consumers and reduce the cost of disposing of food waste.
- they can offer products at lower prices than supermarkets and shops selling goods with a single-use plastic packaging.
- they often offer products purchased adopting specific quality criteria: certified organic, ethical production, coming from the surrounding area to reduce transport and to support local economies.
- they help re-qualify the professional figure of the seller to provide the consumers with a series of information both on products such as their ecological footprint and the production chain, and on their use, even from a nutritional point of view.

The experiences of ordinary supermarkets that open special bulk sections where shoppers can buy certain loose foods by weight rather than by individual packages are therefore becoming popular. All the [participatory self-managed supermarkets](#), for example, adopt zero waste strategies and propose sections of bulk quality products.

The creation of a bulk store in a city neighborhood or in a village is in itself a cultural message, highlighting the willingness to adopt suitable trade methods to solve major environmental problems. Moreover, in many cases these stores carry out specific activities to inform and involve consumers and citizenship on the themes of zero waste campaigns, environmental sustainability, the new transition towards organic food production. In this way the bulk stores become real spaces of environmental education.

Many internet sites inform national consumers about all the stores offering bulk products in different countries, such as the [litterless.com](#) website in United States, the [franceinter.fr](#) website in France, the [zerowaster.com](#) website in United Kingdom, the [nonsprecare](#) website in Italy, The [bepakt.com website](#) managed by a startup enterprise in Germany, offers a list of Zero-Waste Grocery Stores around the world and interesting information about the ongoing practices.

Small stores and groceries who have never abandoned the traditional practices of selling non-packaged products represent today a vanguard in the framework of these new international trends. By recovering these practices and by implementing appropriate solutions to ensure the required quality of the products, new enterprises and cooperatives can take advantage of these innovative market opportunities and help build a more sustainable world.

### To know more

[Article in franceinter.fr](#)

[La vente en vrac in Ademe.fr website](#)

[Article in euronews.com website](#)

[Article in theguardian.com](#)



[bepakt.com](http://bepakt.com) website

[Article in salir.com](http://Article in salir.com)

[Article in vivirsinplastico.com](http://Article in vivirsinplastico.com)

[Nonsprecare.it](http://Nonsprecare.it) website

[Article in lifegate.com](http://Article in lifegate.com)

[Litterless.com](http://Litterless.com) website

[Zerowaster.com](http://Zerowaster.com) website

[Article in smithsonianmag.com](http://Article in smithsonianmag.com)

[The sourcebulkfoods.com.au](http://The sourcebulkfoods.com.au) website

[UN Environment](http://UN Environment) *Single-use plastics. A Roadmap for Sustainability*

[Beat Plastic Pollution in UN Environment website](http://Beat Plastic Pollution in UN Environment website)

