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In plastics ban, cash door opens for youth groups

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The ban on plastic carrier bags will take effect on Monday as scheduled after a court in Nairobi declined to suspend implementation. PHOTO | FILE | AFP

In Summary

- Industrialists, women and youth groups will get an array of regulatory and tax incentives to produce eco-friendly bag as polythene bags disappear from retail outlets.



By BONFACE OTIENO
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Kenya is set to roll out a number of incentives to encourage investors to venture into alternative packaging materials after the High Court declined to suspend the plastics ban which takes effect Monday.

Industrialists, women and youth groups will get an array of regulatory and tax incentives to produce eco-friendly bag as polythene bags disappear from retail outlets, officials said.

Last week, the Environment ministry said about 40 manufacturers were interested in producing bio-degradable bags.

“We have commissioned a consultant to look at the various incentive schemes that we can provide to them,” said Environment principal secretary Charles Sunkuli.

“We are not only looking at improving their operating environment but are also proposing a tax incentive scheme to make producers’ businesses profitable,” Mr Sunkuli said, adding the ministry would be pushing to have the incentive scheme adopted by both the national and county governments.

On Friday, plastic manufacturers lost their bid to suspend implementation of the government ban on plastic bags.

They maintained that the ban would cause loss of 600,000 jobs, a claim the ministry has discounted.

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“The economic loss projected by the KAM cannot be accurate because the plastic firms exist not only to produce polythene bags but also make other items such as pipes, buckets and water tanks,” said Mr Sunkuli. That means from today, every manufacturer, retailer and importer of plastic bags will be expected to declare their stock to the National Environmental Management Authority (Nema) and arrange for their disposal.

Under the Environmental Management and Co-ordination Act, any person found producing, importing or using polythene bags after today faces a fine of between Sh2 million and Sh4 million, or imprisonment of up to two years.

Last week, the Environment ministry maintained its hard stand saying any unused thin bags must be regarded as dangerous waste after Monday.

“Polythene bags are made of petrochemicals. My duty is to rid the environment of all kinds of toxins,” said Environment secretary Judi Wakhungu last week.

The High Court judges had on Thursday handed local manufacturers a six month grace period to discard stockpiles in their premises.

Retail outlets alone distribute 100 million plastic bags to shoppers annually, according to the ministry’s statistics.

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