

AUCHAN RETAIL'S POSITION

29 September 2022

Auchan Retail was surprised to learn, via press release, of the action initiated against it by the non-profit organisations Clientearth, Surfrider Foundation Europe and Zero Waste France for a potential breach of its duty of care regarding plastics.

Auchan Retail shares these organisations' concerns about the importance of the fight against plastic pollution. Contrary to their claims, these non-profit organisations have never approached Auchan Retail, and it seems they lack a clear vision both of the efforts made by the company over many years in this area and of the results achieved to date.

The fight against plastic pollution is a key focus of Auchan Retail's CSR strategy. As stated on p.22 of its [2021 Extra-Financial Performance Declaration](#), fighting plastic pollution is the second of the company's three stated CSR actions. Since mid-2020, this fight has been shaped by meetings or discussions with multiple stakeholders, including Zero Waste Europe, leading to the publication of the "[Fight against Plastic Pollution](#)" policy in March 2021. This policy, which can be viewed on the auchan-retail.com website, gives a detailed account of the company's commitments, goals and action plans.

Furthermore, plastics were a stated CSR action area in the "Auchan 2022" business plan launched over three years ago. Two ambitions were set out here: (i) for 100% of Auchan-brand packaging to be reusable, recyclable or home-compostable; and (ii) to eliminate plastics as much as possible from the catering professions and self-service fruit and vegetables.

Milestones were set for the period 2022-2030 in light of these ambitious goals and the number of stakeholders involved. These are detailed in the [Plastics Policy](#) on the auchan-retail.com website. All of the company's voluntary measures were made public in the [2021 Extra-Financial Performance Declaration](#) (p.64 and onwards) published in March 2022.

Reducing the use of virgin plastics, improving recyclability and integrating recyclable materials: these commitments were officially ratified by Auchan Retail's signature of the European Plastics Pact in March 2020 - a commitment that the company renewed in 2022. Each Auchan entity is furthermore at liberty to set more ambitious country-specific targets. For example, Auchan Retail Poland, with its signature of the Polski Pakt Plastikowy in 2020, joined Auchan Retail France (a signatory in 2019) in the group of countries signing a domestic pact.

Also worthy of mention are the many effective, practical initiatives to reduce plastic consumption by the various Auchan Retail subsidiaries. These include:

- The launch of a shopping bag made from recycled textiles to replace their plastic equivalent, and the creation of a French circular economy textile sector with Tissages de Charlieu, with an eventual target saving of 1,360 tonnes of plastic per year.
- The development and use of 100% plant-based trays made from materials from farming by-products (e.g. sugar cane), which are certified home-compostable and recyclable. This project was awarded the “LSA Trade and Consumption” prize in the “Development and Environmental Responsibility” category, and reduces annual plastic consumption by 1,100 tonnes.
- A review of Auchan-brand packaging resulting, for instance, in a range of new ham products using 65% less plastic, i.e. a saving of 2.5 tonnes of plastic per year; or a packet-free tea and herbal infusions range that saves 25 tonnes of plastic per year.

These initiatives and many others are described in the above-mentioned [Extra-Financial Performance Declaration](#) (p.67), as well as on the Pacte Plastique France website.

As part of its Duty of Care, chapters of Auchan Retail’s vigilance plan give a detailed description of environmental actions that specifically target plastics ([2021 Extra-Financial Performance Declaration](#), p.88). This topic is also addressed in the overall materiality matrix on p.26 of the same document. It is clearly baseless to claim that Auchan Retail may be in breach of its duty of care.

All of Auchan Retail’s 2021 CSR actions are reflected in improvements to its extra-financial ratings. In December 2021, the ratings agency Moody’s ESG Solutions gave the company an A1 sustainability rating, placing it among the Top 150 rated companies and in third place for European food and non-food retailers.

In July 2022, a financing body specialising in socially responsible investment recognised Auchan Retail as the top-rated company among the 18 assessed. Special mention was made in this assessment - to which Surfrider Foundation Europe contributed as a technical expert

- of its approach to plastics and results in this area.

Auchan Retail’s proactive, realistic approach takes account of the concerns of NGOs with which it is in constant dialogue, the concerns and guidance of the States where the company has a presence, and the technical and industrial capacities of the partners that it works alongside to achieve these transformations. The initial results, and the alignment of all stakeholders as part of a complex strategy, confirm that the efforts made by Auchan Retail since 2020 in its fight against plastic pollution remain on course.

As per the undertaking set out in its plan, Auchan Retail will publish its progress and its enhanced plastic reduction goals as part of its 2022 Extra-Financial Performance Declaration in March 2023.