

Head of Environmental Management Bureau backs proposal to impose tax on single-use plastics

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources-Environmental Management Bureau (DENR-EMB) has expressed support for a proposal to tax the consumption of single-use plastics as a proactive measure to curb plastic pollution in the country.

“Imposing tax on single-use plastics is a positive development for the environment in several ways. It can promote use of reusable packaging, reduce single-use plastic wastes, and extend the life of sanitary landfills,” EMB Director William P. Cuñado said.

Cuñado was reacting to Finance Secretary Benjamin Diokno’s proposal to impose a tax on single-use plastics as part of the country’s commitment to address climate change, as well as to allow the government to earn additional revenues.



He said that the DENR has been pushing for a similar tax measure to combat plastic pollution since the administration of former President Rodrigo Roa Duterte.

Cuñado pointed out that the measure will also prompt behavioral change among stakeholders towards proper waste management.

“With this proposal, it can potentially replace the ‘throw-away culture’ and address the long-standing problem of plastic wastes ending up in our oceans and waterways,” he said.

Single-use plastics are among the primary wastes collected during the DENR’s coastal clean-up campaigns.

However, Cuñado acknowledged that implementing the tax measure may need careful deliberations with other government agencies, as “imposing an additional expense on stakeholders need to be reasonable and beneficial.”

The EMB chief is hoping for the institutionalization of a circular economy that aims to reuse, re-manufacture, or recycle waste.

Republic Act 11898 or the Extended Producer Responsibility Act of 2022, which lapsed into law on July 23, 2022, aims to institutionalize the Extended Producer Responsibility or EPR system in Republic Act 9003 or the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000.

Under the EPR scheme, manufacturers will be responsible for the treatment, disposal, or recycling of their post-consumer products.

“As long as there is an abundant supply of disposable plastics produced, consumers will always use these out of convenience. But, if these will be taxed, it may serve as motivation for the public to opt for reusable or recyclable products, which can result in a waste-free behavior for the betterment of the environment,” Cuñado said.

Since the National Solid Waste Management Commission approved in February 2021 the inclusion of plastic soft drink straw and plastic coffee stirrer in the list of non-environmentally acceptable products, the EMB has been holding public consultations on the phaseout schedule of these single-use plastics. ###