



#BreakFreeFromPlastic



Civil organization present platform on the Colonialism of plastic waste and its use as fuel in México

- The signatory organizations urge a halt to the importation of plastic waste, and they consider it a socio environmental injustice problem.
- In the last two years, there has been an increase in the import of plastic waste into Mexico, specially from the United States
- In the period from 2018 to 2021, the shipment of plastic waste to Mexico grew by 121%.

Mexico City, April 17, 2023. The Malditos Plásticos Colectiva (Acción Ecológica, Asociación Ecológica Santo Tomás, Fronteras Comunes), Geocomunes, Geografía Septentrional, No es Basura (NEB), Academia Mexicana de Derecho Ambiental and the Internationa Pollutant Elimination Network (IPEN), present the virtual platform on “Plastic Waste Colonialism” due to the pollution and problems caused by the export of plastic waste to Mexico and an interactive map on the use of plastic waste as fuel.

It contains downloadable geospatial data through the use of interactive visualization of the volume and value of plastic waste exports to México for the Tariff code 3915 (Waste, parings and scrap, of plastics and their subclassifications), mainly from the United States for the period 2015-2021 (and some data to 2022). The databases consulted were the internet tariff information governmental system (SIAVI), DATASUR and the USA Trade Online of the US CENSUS Bureau, which differ from each other.

The information is accompanied by a section with case studies describing territories with deep socioenvironmental impacts due to waste incineration in cement kilns and plastic recycling processes. Cases of corporate *greenwashing*, legal cases of environmental regressions and a new compilation work on territories affected by the collapse of the waste we already have throughout the country are shown, as if to import more.

Within the case studies, the Platform on plastic waste and refuse-derived fuels (RDF) present the location of cement plants that use it, with an approximation of the number of populations affected by this practice, as well as the legal loopholes in its regulation.

The worsening of the global plastic waste pollution crisis was evidenced by the closure of China’s borders in 2018 as well as by the entry into force of the Ban Amendment in

2019 and the Plastics Amendment in 2021 of the Basel Convention. All this within efforts to achieve a legally binding International Plastics Treaty and in the face of pronouncements from the UN Special Rapporteur on Chemicals emphatic in pointing out that it is the responsibility of State to prevent chemical exposure and plastic pollution, as well as the need to put an end to incineration for its negative impacts on health, the environment and human rights. All this within a national context that is paradoxically contrary to what should be being done, by encouraging these toxic imports and promoting the waste and plastics incineration.

Main Findings:

- Plastic waste exports to Mexico increased from 2018 to 2021 by 121%, despite the entry into force of the Basel Convention Plastics Amendment in January 2021.
- The highest annual growth of these total plastic waste exports to Mexico was 64.7% in 2020.
- The United States is responsible for more than 90% (SIAVI 94% and DATASUR 98%) of imports. Italy, Germany, Holland and China together account for only 3% of the total volume.
- The most shipped type of plastic in the period under review was the ambiguous Tariff code 391590 (Other plastics) with 40%. Within this code, the imports that increased the most was the subcode for PET waste, representing 24%.
 - The subcode that increased the most in volume from 2015 to 2021 is 39159002 (Waste, paring, and scrap of plastic of polyethylene terephthalate PET) from 2,000 to almost 68,000 tons.
 - Polyethylene terephthalate and PET offcuts (39159002) is the type of plastic waste whose volume of shipments from the US grew the most. In 2020, it quadrupled the volume shipped the previous year, from just over 3,000 tons to more than 20,000 tons. By 2021, it was more than 38,000 tons.
- The increase in imports observed for sub tariff 39151001 (Of polymers of ethylene) were 14% and for 39152002 (Of polymers of styrene) were 5%. The sub tariff 39159099 (Other plastics) accounted for more than one-third (38%) of total plastic waste exports to Mexico from 2015 to 2021.
- Between 2015 and August 2022, the exports of plastic waste from the US to Mexico represented a value of 225 million US dollars, and again the most important tariff fraction was “Other plastics”.
- For the period 2015 to August 2022, exports of plastic waste to Mexico were made through border cities via land. From the city of San Diego, California

comes in 49% and in second place is Laredo, Texas which represents 41%. These two cities account for 90% of the waste sent to Mexico.

- Tamaulipas customs entered through most of the total imports, representing 50.56%, and the customs office with the highest volume of imports is Tijuana, with almost 27%.

Once this plastic waste enters Mexican territory, there is no oversight or follow-up by the environmental authority as to what type of treatment it receives or where it is managed. One of the hypotheses that we continue to investigate is that they end up in landfills and are used fuel in cement kilns.

Relevant data of the investigation of Refuse Derived Fuel (RDF)

- A total of 33 sites and/or facilities located in 19 states of the Mexican Republic that operate coprocessing and energy “recycling” processes as RDF were mapped.
- Using data from INEGI 2020, we documented the proximity of urban and rural settlements that are being impacted by each facility, without having evaluated the impact. This gives us an approximate idea of the population exposed to pollution generated by the facilities, that coprocess waste that generate emissions of dioxins, sulfur dioxide, heavy metals among others.
- *Greenwashing* practices related to RDF have been detected by cement companies and industries that have obvious plastics production projects. These companies have developed apparently sustainable and climate friendly communication strategies.
- Companies that use and /or process RDF in the country may be operating in a legal loophole. As RDF is a mixture of household special management and hazardous waste, it is difficult to clarify both its legal definition and the framework of its competence.

The Malditos Plásticos Collectiva points out that the objective of this work is to make visible the problem of plastic waste colonialism in Mexico and demands that plastic waste imports from any part of the world be stopped and banned. That countries take responsibility for their own waste; that compliance with the Basel Convention, the Ban Amendment and the application of the Plastic Amendment be reviewed in a precautionary manner and with a life cycle approach. End waste incineration and coprocessing of waste; reduce the production of plastics and start with a federal ban on single use plastics.

Links to platform and reports:

[Colonialism of plastic waste.](#)

[Plastic waste, refuse-derived fuels and cement plants in México](#)

Report and executive summary available at:

https://ipen.org/sites/default/files/documents/basura_plastica_cdr_y_cementerias_mexico.pdf

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¹ <https://mexicotoxico.org.mx/colonialismo-basura/>

² <https://mexicotoxico.org.mx/accionecologica/>