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Black plastic is one of the most problematic forms of plastic you can find on supermarket shelves – **but what makes this microwave meal tray favourite so bad?**

Any plastic food packaging that’s designed to be used once and then thrown away is not good news for the environment. But the reason that black plastic poses a particular problem is because despite being ‘recyclable’ in theory, the reality is that **the majority of black plastic doesn’t end up being recycled.**

Here’s why: the method used to colour the plastic means it can’t be recognised by the sorting systems used in most recycling plants. If you’ve ever seen images of a recycling sorting system, you’ll have seen the “waste” moving along a conveyor belt, with different types of material being removed at different stages.

As black plastic can’t be recognised by optical sorting systems, products made with it usually end up reaching the end of the processing line as ‘residue’ – **which means they’re headed straight to landfill.**

Creating a new recycling system that is able to distinguish black plastic would take a lot of time and money, and a far simpler solution already exists – to ban this hard-to-process

material as soon as possible and stop it adding to the pile of plastic pollution ending up in rivers, oceans and landfill.

The government has the power to make this happen, so we're calling on them to ban black plastic and other "problem plastics" by the end of 2019. **These items are difficult or impossible to recycle, or are toxic to the environment.** And although these problem plastics are difficult to process, they're easy to replace, with lots of alternatives already available. Given how much we know about the damage that plastic is doing to our oceans, it's ridiculous that materials that can't be recycled at reasonable cost are still in the system at all.

There are loads of different types of plastic in existence, and many of them would be challenging or impossible to replace. But when it comes to these "problem plastics", that's definitely not the case. Whilst there may have been a time when they seemed like innovative new materials, we now know that they're outdated, hazardous and easily replaceable with better alternatives.