



Viewpoint: The big picture about Maryland's styrofoam container ban

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By Ron Attman, CEO of Acme Paper & Supply Co. in Savage.

A short time ago, I learned how another country was able to make very positive environmental gains through culture change.

I was having lunch with one of my suppliers — a resident of Stockholm, Sweden — and he told me that he composts all his household waste because there are two composting facilities located just a few blocks from his house. Sweden's residents are required by law to recycle and compost all waste, including uneaten food. Those same laws placed recycling centers within 300 yards of every residential area. For them, sustainability has become an almost effortless process.

That makes me think — if a whole country can accomplish that level of environmental consciousness, surely our state can do the same.

While Maryland is the first state to ban styrofoam containers — effective July 1, 2020 — this move is just the beginning. The more than 31,000 tons of styrofoam that were discarded into Maryland landfills annually is only 6% of the total plastic that gets thrown away, yet it comprises roughly 30% of the volume due to its density.

Unlike styrofoam, most plastic is recyclable, but people must put in the effort to keep it out of our landfills and waterways. Sadly, much of the waste that enters landfills is compostable, but with virtually no accessible composting outlets, the waste is recklessly discarded.

It is vital to understand that there are better alternatives that minimize both the disruption of our ecosystem and our lives. As Maryland joins other states looking to adopt more eco-friendly public policies, I remain hopeful that we all will embrace a more environmentally responsible mindset going forward.

The big picture shows that cleaner and greener options are available, and we should be more mindful about what we toss in the trash.

It is an undeniable fact that our actions today will affect future generations of Marylanders. Making environmentally conscious choices over the next few years can pay enormous dividends for many decades to come.

Ron Attman is the CEO of Acme Paper & Supply Co. in Savage.

About Acme Paper:

Founded in 1946, Acme Paper & Supply Co. is the leading Mid-Atlantic distributor of innovative, customized and cost-effective packaging, equipment and supplies, with an emphasis on sustainability. The company provides wholesale distribution to the hospitality, health care, recreation, education, food processing, and property management industries. In 2013, Acme Paper purchased ReStockIt.com, a recognized leader in business-to-business ecommerce. For more information about Acme Paper, visit www.acmepaper.com or call 410.792.2333.