

McDonald's Tests Out Ditching Polystyrene Cups In 2000 Stores

Mat McDermott | March 21, 2012

Baby steps towards cleaning up part of an often dirty business, fast food chains: McDonald's has responded to a 2011 shareholder resolution, and is testing whether it can do away with polystyrene foam beverage cups.

McDonald's is currently testing a double-walled fiber hot cup, as the company continues to seek more environmentally sustainable solutions. The test is in approximately 2000 restaurants in the US, primarily on the West Coast. The objective of this test is to assess customer acceptance, operational impact, and overall performance.

(As You Sow)



Rupert Ganzer/CC BY-ND 2.0

Those 2000 restaurants represent roughly 15% of McDonald's stores in the United States.

Considering that McDonald's has made genuinely good strides in reducing packaging waste, and using recycled content in food packaging, I probably shouldn't be too down on them.

But I have to say, considering the environmental noxiousness and longevity in terms of litter pollution (remember that those foam cups essentially never biodegrade, only breaking down into small foam pieces), that it took a shareholder resolution to force the company to act is frankly shameful—as is basing the decision on "customer acceptance, operational impact, and overall performance" and not it just being the environmentally right thing to do.

With something like foam cups, there should be no question of using them, ever, for any company that hopes to have its sustainability efforts taken seriously.