



Plastic-free supermarket

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WORLD'S FIRST PLASTIC-FREE GROCERY AISLE OPENS IN AMSTERDAM



A Dutch grocery chain has installed an entirely plastic-free supermarket aisle to help shoppers cut down on plastic packaging.

Amsterdam has been at the forefront of a number of innovative ideas – the world's first stock exchange was established in the city in 1602, and in 2016 Amsterdam was the setting for the test of the world's first driverless passenger bus. Now, British environmental campaign group **A Plastic Planet** and Dutch supermarket chain **Ekoplaza** have teamed up to create the world's first entirely plastic-free supermarket aisle. The Ekoplaza Lab is a 60 square meter space installed in a store on Jan Pieter Heijestraat, in the Oud-West neighbourhood of the city.

Instead of plastic fixtures and fittings, the aisle uses lampshades reclaimed from other stores, metal-and-wood shelves and cardboard labels. Most importantly, however, the almost 700 products for sale are packaged using non-plastic materials, ranging from glass to compostable biomaterials. Products included in the pilot range from meat and dairy to lentils, fruits and vegetables. A second store, expected to be located in The Hague, is set to open in June this year. Ekoplaza hopes to shortly roll the plastic-free aisles out across its 74 stores.

The new retail space hopes to convince consumers that plastic is not necessary when shopping. According to Sian Sutherland, co-founder of A Plastic Planet, "For decades shoppers have been sold the lie that we can't live without plastic in food and drink. A plastic-free aisle dispels all that." With the grocery retail sector accounting for more than 40 percent of all plastic packaging, plastic-free grocery stores could also make commercial sense. In the words of Ekoplaza chief executive, Erik

Does: “We know that our customers are sick to death of products laden in layer after layer of thick plastic packaging.”

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Takeaway:

Ekoplaza's pop-up joins a host of other recent innovative ideas for developing environmentally-friendly packaging, from reusable, [smart coffee cups](#) to food that doubles as [tableware](#). As shoppers become more aware of the ethical and environmental impact of goods and services, retailers will need to make more effort to get rid of plastic. What other ways are there for environmentally-friendly packaging?