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New waste plastic, paper import rules to take effect

By Lin Chia-nan / Staff reporter



New regulations to curb the import of waste plastics and paper, under which violators can be fined up to NT\$10 million (US\$327,268), were announced yesterday by the Environmental Protection Administration (EPA) and are to take effect on Thursday.

After China implemented a ban on foreign waste imports in January, the amount of waste plastics entering Taiwan between January and July increased by 150,000 tonnes over the same period last year, while waste paper imports grew by 190,000 tonnes, EPA data showed yesterday.

While some industries can recycle waste plastics and paper into new products, the drastic increase in imports alarmed the agency.



Environmental Protection Administration Deputy Minister Chang Tzi-chin gestures at an image on a screen at a news conference in Taipei on Aug. 13.



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After proposing the new rules to curb imports on Aug. 13, the EPA last month held a public hearing on the issue, and a revised version of the rules was released yesterday.

Licensed local firms will only be allowed to import waste plastics that originate in their own overseas production processes or those that are of a single material, but not from original production processes, the agency said.

Neither form of waste plastic can be mixed with different materials or contaminated with soil, it added.

The ban on soil pollution is to prevent the entry of foreign animal and plant diseases via waste wrappers produced by the agriculture sector, a suggestion made by environmentalists during the public hearing, EPA Department of Waste Management Director-General Lai Ying-ying (賴瑩瑩) said.

The only waste paper allowed to be imported are kraft paper, corrugated paper or cardboard that is not bleached, or deinked paper, the agency said, adding that only paper makers with legal licenses can import such materials.

“Import of waste newspaper and magazines will continue to be banned because such material is available in Taiwan and opening this sector would affect the already low prices of recycled paper,” Lai said.

Importers would be required to file reports about the flow of their waste, and the EPA and Customs Administration officials are to increase inspections of waste imports at ports, she added.

Importers who contravene the new rules will have to return all their imports to the source nations and could be fined from NT\$60,000 to NT\$10 million in line with the Waste Disposal Act (廢棄物清理法), the EPA said.

Local importers should not take the new rules lightly, it said.

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