
Global Quantity Of Plastic In Oceans To Nearly Double To 250 Million Tonnes By 2025

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Kochi: About eight million tonnes of [plastic](#) end up in the oceans each year and the global quantity will nearly double to 250 million tonnes by 2025, says a new analysis paper.

The new International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) co-authored analysis paper, released recently, warned that the 'plastic soup' contains toxic chemicals, which could pose risks to marine species and humans.

It said reliable quantitative estimations of input loads, sources and originating sectors represent a significant knowledge gap, "but it is suggested that every year almost eight million tonnes leak to the ocean."

It said estimates are that oceans may already contain over 150 million tonnes of [plastic](#), of which around 250,000 tonnes, fragmented into five trillion plastic pieces, may be floating at the oceans' surface.

"It has also been estimated that the global quantity of plastic in the ocean will nearly double to 250 million tonnes by 2025, which likely also represents a pollutant load of millions of tonnes of chemical additives," it said.

Marine species ingest potentially contaminated plastics directly, and by eating contaminated prey, says the paper titled 'Marine litter plastics and microplastics and their toxic chemicals components: the need for urgent preventive measures'.

"Seabirds are particularly vulnerable, with studies showing the presence of additives used as flame retardants in plastics, as well as foams and textiles, which were discovered in their stomachs and fatty tissue," said the paper, published in Environmental Sciences, Europe.

The paper said that at a global level, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has estimated the economic impact of marine plastics (excluding microplastics), including losses incurred by fisheries and tourism due to plastic littering, as well as beach clean-up costs, at around USD 13 billion per year.

"Looking at the scale of the marine plastic problem today and at the projections for future growth in production of plastic globally, it is clear we are in the midst of a major crisis," said Carl Gustaf Lundin, Director of IUCN's Global Marine and Polar Programme.

Ludin said urgent action was needed to reduce toxic chemicals leaching into oceans from plastic.

To reduce amount of contaminants in marine plastics, the authors recommend addressing issues in the life-cycle design of plastic products and creating products that minimise use of hazardous substances, an approach known as 'green chemistry'.

They also concluded that the development of best practice codes for industry is likely to be more efficient than relying on 'end-of-pipe' solutions; and existing scientific evidence and precautionary principles should drive action from scientists, industry, policy and civil society to curb leaking of plastics into the marine environment in the short term.

"Societies need to act at multiple levels," said Joao Sousa, IUCN Project Manager for Marine Plastics, co-author of the report.

"Developed countries need to identify and adopt less harmful production processes and promote alternatives, whilst sound waste management and awareness-raising should be the main priority for developing nations," said Sousa.

The paper was authored by members of a working group associated with the Stockholm and Basel Conventions multilateral environmental agreements aimed at protecting human health and the environment from hazardous chemicals and wastes and other authors.
