



## **Memorandum of Understanding For Targeted Reduction in the Distribution of Grocery Bags in Massachusetts Supermarkets**

**March 12, 2009**

Whereas paper and plastic disposable grocery bags are distributed extensively throughout our society and are typically disposed of after their initial use; and

Whereas paper and plastic disposable bags consume valuable natural resources in their production, increase waste generation, and contribute to litter; and

Whereas supermarkets and grocery stores recognize natural resource limitations and the need to design systems and encourage practices that minimize the use of and recover of these valuable materials; and

Whereas there are over 500 supermarkets in Massachusetts distributing an estimated 1.5 billion paper and plastic disposable grocery bags each year, and

Whereas the Massachusetts Food Association is a membership organization that represents the interests of the supermarket and grocery industry in Massachusetts; and

Whereas the MassDEP is responsible for ensuring clean air and water, safe management and recycling of solid and hazardous wastes, timely cleanup of hazardous waste sites and spills, and the preservation of wetlands and coastal resources

Therefore the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) and the Massachusetts Food Association (MFA) through its members agree to work collaboratively to reduce the environmental impacts of paper and plastic disposable grocery bags by:

- 1) Setting a 33% reduction goal in the distribution of paper and plastic disposable grocery bags by 2013
- 2) Establishing incentives to encourage a reduction in the demand for bags and increased use of reusable bags by consumers
- 3) Establishing plastic grocery bag and other plastic packaging recycling programs at all participating supermarkets and grocery stores
- 4) Increasing the recycled content and/or the percentage of biodegradable grocery bags offered for distribution.

In implementing this MOU, the MassDEP commits to:

- 1) Provide technical assistance, training, education and support to supermarkets and grocery stores in setting up disposable grocery bag waste reduction programs.

- 2) Provide current best management practices for recycling of disposable grocery bags in Massachusetts and identify recycling organizations and hauling infrastructures to support plastic grocery bag recycling.
- 3) Provide recognition to MFA and participating supermarkets and grocery stores upon making progress and achieving milestones towards disposable grocery bag reduction including reduction in grocery bag distribution, increasing plastic grocery bag recycling, increasing recycled/biodegradable content in grocery bags, and increasing the use of reusable bags.
- 4) Monitor progress towards the goals established in the MOU in cooperation with MFA.

In implementing this MOU, the MFA commits to:

- 1) Encourage MFA member companies, new supermarket companies and independent operators to sign on to this MOU and commit to reducing the distribution of paper and plastic disposable grocery bags as measured by a reduction from the average annual paper and plastic disposable grocery bags distributed per store between 2006-2007.
- 2) Assist its members in implementing best management practices and employee training that encourages the reduction of disposable plastic grocery bag distribution.
- 3) Promote the adoption of appropriate store incentives to encourage the expanded use of reusable bags such as store credit for reusable bag use, sales of reusable bags, or other programs
- 4) Encourage the development and maintenance of in-store plastic grocery bag and other plastic packaging recycling programs at all participating locations
- 5) Increase awareness among supermarket companies, employees and consumers of the positive environmental, operational, and financial impacts of reducing the distribution of disposable grocery bags, increasing plastic grocery bag recycling, and increasing the recycled content or biodegradability of grocery bags.
- 6) Annually survey supermarkets and grocery stores and report annually to MassDEP data on the number of disposable grocery bags purchased per store, the amount of plastic grocery bags collected for recycling and other related information such as reusable bag sales, recycled content in bags, and biodegradability of bags.

By signing this MOU, the MassDEP and the MFA express their intent to work voluntarily and cooperatively toward the above-mentioned goals.

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 Laurie Burt  
 Commissioner,  
 Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection

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 Date

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 Christopher Flynn  
 President,  
 Massachusetts Food Association

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 Date