

Plastic bags get thicker and more costly in 2010

By [Michael Hamlyn](#)

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Next year in June the plastic bags sold in supermarkets and other stores are likely to be increased in thickness, not because of new regulations, but because of the phased approach of the original rules.

Giving a written reply on Monday, 19 October 2009, to a Parliamentary question from Annette Lovemore of the Democratic Alliance, the Environment Minister, Buyelwa Sonjica said that business, labour and government agreed in 2002 to implement a minimum allowable thickness of 30 microns, with a maximum tolerance of 20% for five years, reducing to 10% thereafter.

She added that an additional grace period of two years was allowed to reach the 10% tolerance on a 30 micron bag. "The 10% tolerance is therefore required to be achieved in June 2010," the minister said.

Sonjica also said that it is common practice for industry to pass on costs to the consumer, so it is possible that the costs associated with compliance to the phased implementation of the bag thickness may be passed on.

"If this happens, it will further encourage the reduction in the use of plastic bags and further increase the reuse of reusable bags," she said.

"It must also be noted that consumers currently have the choice to bring their own bags for packaging their products."

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