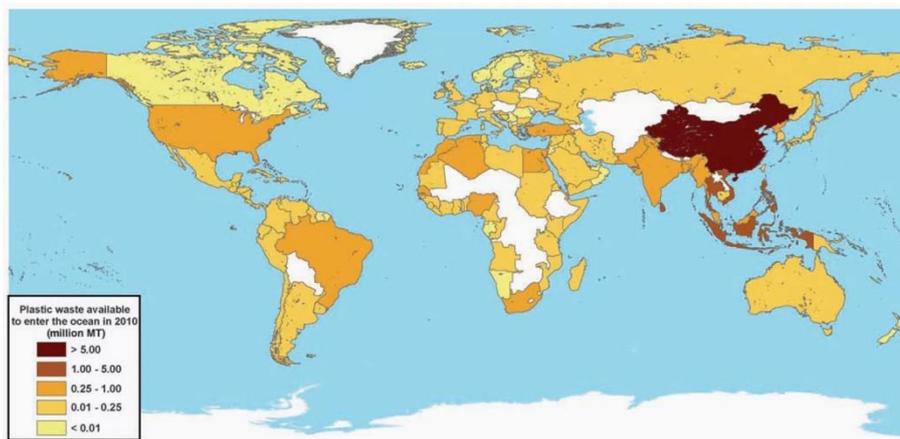


The issue of plastics in our oceans has risen in awareness over the past couple years. Environmentalists are putting in great efforts to alert the public about the devastating effects that plastics can have on the marine ecosystems. It is estimated that each year eight million metric tonnes of plastic waste enters our ocean, with around 80% of that coming from land sources, such as household litter, debris from construction and industrial factories. This plastic then goes on to have numerous environmental impacts. At least 267 marine species have been effected by plastic in some way, whether this be by ingesting it or from accumulation of the toxic chemicals that then get passed along the food chain. These have the potential to end up in the human food chain that could cause health problems.

This map shows which countries are the largest polluters of plastics into our oceans. This is a key point to consider when researching, as some of the smallest polluters are receiving the worst effects of the problem due to the largest polluters. Also consider how LEDCs and MEDCs are able to deal with the plastic waste. Less developed countries will have fewer recycling opportunities and so could be neglecting environmental ways to reuse plastics.



The two key areas to look at when researching this topic are lessening the damage already done and preventing any further damage. In 2017 at the UN Oceans Conference, the member states were united in their recognition that plastics in the ocean is becoming a global crisis. A draft resolution was made that aimed, by 2050, 'to prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds, in particular from land-based activities, including marine debris and nutrient pollution.' The decision was also made to put a cap on the amount of plastic a country would be allowed to put into the sea. However, this resolution wasn't legally binding and so could adjustments be made to make it so?

Other possibilities could be explored to reverse some of the damage already done. Simple activities such as beach cleaning can help certain ecosystems massively. Could there be a way that this could be encouraged in different countries? Perhaps more funding should go into innovative methods to help remove the plastic in the ocean. However, this produces more issues as countries are unwilling to claim the plastic collected from the oceans as this could lead to further pollution in their own countries. Perhaps there could be a solution found to deal with the plastic collected from the oceans.



Also consider methods to prevent plastics from entering the oceans in the first place. Many countries have imposed rules to limit plastic packaging but this is not the only producer of waste. Large industrial companies are one of the biggest polluters in releasing toxic chemicals into the oceans. Perhaps more needs to be done to restrict them. Also think about your country's dependence on plastics. Many countries are economically reliant on using plastics in their industries so think about ways that plastic consumption could be reduced without affecting the economy of your country.

To consider

- How does your country deal with plastic waste?
- Methods that could be put in place to prevent plastics entering the oceans and solutions for limiting the damage already caused.
- How can we deal with the plastics once they are out of our oceans? How should they be distributed amongst countries?
- Is there anything your country can do to protect the marine life and ensure that species don't become harmed?

Useful Websites

- <https://oceanconference.un.org/>
- <https://www.unenvironment.org/news-and-stories/story/beating-pollution-redesign>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HQTUWK7CM-Y>