

## First Plastic Recycling Plant Planned for the UAE

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The UAE is in the early stages of building the country's first food-grade recycled plastics plant, according to the Ministry of Industry and Advanced Technology (MoIAT). The plant, which will be capable of processing 12,000 tonnes of polyethylene terephthalate (PET) plastic per annum, is scheduled to be located in Abu Dhabi in the coming years.

At the present time, the MoIAT has overseen the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the major players in the deal to assess the feasibility of the project. Once completed, the plant is expected to boost the country's Net Zero goals by eliminating carbon emissions, as well as providing a stimulus to the local economy through the creation of thousands of jobs.

### In the pipeline

PET is one of the most commonly used types of plastic in food packaging, such as water, juice and other drinks bottles. Globally, the human race consumes an astonishing 1.2 million plastic bottles every single minute and historically, the UAE population has had an outsized impact on plastic pollution.

However, the government is making a concerted effort towards addressing this issue. From January 1<sup>st</sup> next year, there will be a nationwide ban on single-use plastic bags. That follows on from the introduction of a surcharge of 25 fils per bag in Dubai from last summer, as well as the already-announced phasing out of the bags in Abu Dhabi and Sharjah.

Now, it looks as though plastic bottles are the next target in the MoIAT's crosshairs. The 40,000ft<sup>2</sup> facility will be jointly managed by Repeet (who will manage the plant), the BEEAH Group (which will supply a feedstock of plastics over a seven-year initial contract) and Agthia (which will manufacture new products from the recycled plastics). Globally, the market for recycled materials is expected to exceed \$46 billion by 2025.

### Economy and ecology align

When the plant is operating at full capacity, it should be able to handle 12,000 tonnes of PET bottles per year. That will preclude the emissions of 18,000 metric tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>, thus making a substantial contribution towards the UAE's Net Zero by 2050 goals. However, the environmental boost will not come at a cost to the economy; in fact, the undersecretary of the MoIAT believes the plant will be beneficial for both.

That's because it will create 100 employment opportunities of various levels of skill and experience, as well as establishing a circular economy and setting up the UAE as a model

for sustainable industry. Indeed, it's this idea which Omar al Suwaidi is particularly interested in taking into COP28 later this year, which the Emirates is set to host.

“As we approach COP28, the ministry will continue to amplify the important initiatives that fall under the national industrial strategy,” [he explained](#). “For instance, we will utilize ‘Make it in the Emirates’ to attract international investors and companies to engage with the UAE’s industrial sector to help us unlock the opportunities associated with industrial transformation, and circular economy.”