Coop Norway runs litter clean-up in war on plastic waste

The co-op said it was also committed to reducing plastic waste from its operations.

With global concern mounting over plastic pollution, retailer Coop Norway called on employees, customers and co-owners to join a nationwide clean-up campaign.

The "Coop rydder Norge" campaign, run with the organisation Hold Norge Rent (Keep Norway Beautiful), ran from 30 April 30th to 5 May, and saw the co-op’s stores hand out 40,000 pair of gloves and 152,000 garbage bags in 129 stores around the country, and set up 50 collection points for rubbish.

The clean-up is part of a national programme to address the decomposition of plastic waste in the ocean. In 2017 the Norwegian government presented a White Paper to Parliament on waste policies in a circular economy with an emphasis on increasing reuse and recycling. It also announced a development programme to combat plastic and other marine litter, with a budget of NOK150m for 2018.

Coop Norway’s initiative, which focused on coastal areas, lakes and rivers, also saw volunteers upload images and register details of collected waste to help Hold Norge Rent compile a report on marine pollution.

"Littering affects all of us and we in Coop will have a responsibility to do our part," said Knut Lutnes, environmental manager at Coop Norway. "Together with our customers, who are also our owners, we will now contribute to clearing Norway of marine litter."

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He added: "We in Coop are lucky to have over 1.6 million co-owners and many stores across Norway. Together we can strengthen our efforts to effect change. In addition to being a small but important contribution, the goal of the campaign is to raise awareness and understanding of the scale of plastic waste."

Mr Lutnas added that the exercise would help to create awareness, which was important for waste prevention. An estimated 56,000 tonnes of waste is dumped into Norway's waters every year; of this, 70% of this sinks to the bottom of the sea, lakes and rivers, 15% floats and accumulates, and 15% is washed up on land.

"In addition to helping to clean up, Coop is committed to optimising packaging and reducing plastic usage, including finding replacement for more plastic products," said Mr Lutnas. "The entire operations of Coop in the Nordic region are collaborating on this, in addition to measures with other sectors of the grocery industry."

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