

WELCOME STEP

ECO-FRIENDLY BIZ WITNESSES BOOM POST PLASTIC BAN

BINITA JAISWAL @Chennai

THE ban on plastics may have drained the business prospects of a few sectors, but it has given a fresh lease of life for several others. Manufacturers of eco-friendly packaging materials are having a gala time as they are witnessing a sudden spurt in business. Those making alternatives to plastic products say they are flooded with so many orders that they are facing problems in delivering the products on time.

"In the past one week, I have received hundreds of queries about my products. After the plastic ban, there has been a sudden boom in the business," said Anand Singhvi, owner of Sivakasi-based Akshara Paper. Singhvi earlier used to manufacture plastic coated paper boxes for bakeries, sweet shops and the hotel industry.

Last February, he switched to paper boxes and bags coated with water based polymer, which he claims is 100% eco-friendly. "After the ban, things have changed for the better. Presently, we manufacture at least one tonne of paper bags and boxes a day. But looking at the huge demand, we are planning to increase the manufacturing capacity to 100 tonnes a day," added Singhvi.

Sathish Kumar of Naturoab has a similar tale to tell. His firm supplies carry bags, cutlery items and parcel boxes made of biodegradable poly-lactic acid material, which is prepared by fermenting corn starch. "I started my business in 2017 but

was not able to get a single order as people were not interested in my products, which are costlier than plastics" said Sathish. "However, the plastic ban has brought fortune for me. In the last seven days, I have supplied 500 kilos of products to different hotels. There is a huge demand," added the Coimbatore based businessman. One kilo of his product costs around ₹530.

The plastic ban has led to a sudden surge in demand of compostable starch bags, cutlery items made of wood, leaves, cloth and paper bags, straws made out of leaves. Even hoteliers, shop owners and traders are having a tough time managing the situation in the absence of availability of adequate alternatives. "We use at least 600 kg to 700 kg of plastic bags per month to supply chicken to our customers, but after the ban, no agency has been able to supply that quantity of alternatives to us. We are urging our customers to bring their own carry bag and give them a 5% discount," said regional manager (Chennai) of Herboo Chicken, Thirunnam.

