HEALTHY TIPS

IKEA Plans to Switch from Styrofoam to Mushroom-Made Packaging

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Unfortunately, nowadays, almost all of the retail products we purchase are packaged and almost half of this packaging is plastic and Styrofoam too.

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Although packing in plastic has its benefits like lighter weight, durability, longer shelf-life, and convenience, plastic takes a long time to degrade and thus, it causes damage in the environment.

Despite notable advantages, plastic is contributing to the worldwide pollution and more of its setbacks are being revealed. Knowing this, alternative packaging materials have been surfacing out. One such material is a mushroom-based one called Ecocradle.

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Will Ecocradle Be the Future of Packaging?

This alternative material for packaging has been created by Ecovative Design back in 2010 with the help of mycelium technology.

Biodegradable and natural Ecocradle can be grown in a controlled environment within a week. And, what's great about it is that it takes only a couple of weeks to degrade completely.

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This alternative material went viral when the furniture brand IKEA announced that they will switch from Styrofoam packaging to Ecocradle.

Unfortunately, Styrofoam takes centuries to decompose.

On the other hand, the mushroom-based material takes much less and plus it has other advantages like cost-effectiveness and durability. What's more, it was also found to be insulating and flame-resistant like polystyrene.

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IKEA Is Trying to Motivate Others

The initiative, IKEA representatives believe, will serve as a motivation for other companies to give back to their environment and society positively.

Joanna Yarrow, head of sustainability at IKEA, stated that although this is a small step, it's very important in the reduction of waste and restoring the ecological balance.

Mushroom-based packaging also uses only around 12 percent of the energy which is used for the production of plastic and it produces 90 percent less carbon emissions than plastic.

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Non-petroleum packaging will help lower our dependence on fossil fuels, lower the carbon emissions being released into the environment, and keep the biodiversity of our planet safe.

Other companies that are also exploring the world of eco-friendly packaging are Coca Cola, Dell, and P&G.

Styrofoam's Negative Effects Are Dangerous

Despite its known harmful effects on the environment, Styrofoam continues being used as a packaging material.

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This material doesn't just pollute when it's being produced from petroleum, but it also destroys the organisms which ingest it.

According to available data, by the year of 2050, 99 percent of birds will have plastic in their bellies. In developing countries, cattle death has been linked with plastic consumption.

What Does the Manufacturing Look like?

This eco-friendly material isn't very complicated to make. To begin with, agricultural by-products like husk, hemp, and cotton burrs are pressed into the wanted shape.

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Afterwards, the pressed product is seeded with mushroom spores which will sprout mycelium in a couple of days.

Then, the mycelium threads rapidly grow throughout the structure and they bind together and create a shock-resistant and durable material for packaging.

The last step is heat-treating the material to destroy any spores and prevent further fungus growth.

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