

SECTION B

Read Figure 1 and the following extracts (A, B and C) before answering Question 6.

Answer ALL Questions 6(a) to 6(e) and EITHER Question 6(f) OR Question 6(g).

You are advised to spend 1 hour 5 minutes on this section.

Question 6

The market for plastic in the UK

Figure 1: Trend in the purchase of single-use plastic bags in millions, UK, 2014 to 2021

2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
7 500	2 120	1 750	1 130	1 040	627	496	197

Extract A

10p charge continues to reduce use of plastic carrier bags

The 5p charge on single-use carrier bags was introduced in supermarkets in 2015. The charge was increased to 10p in 2021 and extended to all businesses.

The UK Environment Minister said that the plastic bag charge has ended the irrational purchase of billions of single-use carrier bags, thereby protecting our landscapes and ensuring millions of pounds are redistributed to worthy causes. This was needed as without this legislation, the market is not able to effectively manage the situation. Consumers are now in the habit of bringing reusable carrier bags when shopping.

In addition to single-use carrier bag charges, major retailers have offered bottle deposit return schemes and refillable food and cleaning product options. These provide incentives to consumers to reuse their plastic containers.

However, retailers have suggested that most customers do not wish to pay more for cleaning products in reusable packaging. With the average household income falling by 4.3% in 2023, sales of refillable cleaning products are expected to fall from 200 000 to 130 000 this year.

(Source adapted from: <https://www.circularonline.co.uk/news/>)

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Extract B**Plastic packaging tax**

Food manufacturers have criticised the implementation of a new UK environmental tax, warning it will force them to increase prices for consumers.

The 2018 tax was designed to provide incentives to businesses to use recycled plastic in packaging. Businesses manufacturing or importing 10 tonnes or more a year of plastic packaging that contains less than 30% recycled plastic are taxed at £200 a tonne. Plastic packaging containing more than this will be exempt from the tax.

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Helene Roberts, Chief Executive of Robinson Packaging, said increased prices for the consumer would be an unintended consequence of the tax. "It will just create inflationary pressures within the supply chain and firms may need to pass this on." A wide range of businesses are affected by the new tax, including retailers importing items such as bin liners, drink bottles and carrier bags. Food manufacturers are particularly impacted as the industry uses 40% of packaging in the UK.

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(Source adapted from: <https://www.ft.com>)

Extract C**Single-use cups**

An estimated 2.5 billion single-use cups are used in the UK every year by consumers buying coffee from chains and cafes, creating approximately 25 000 tonnes of waste. Research has found that while a 25p charge on single-use cups increases the use of reusable coffee cups in coffee shops, a discount on reusable coffee cups has no impact at all on their use.

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A 25p charge on single-use cups increases the use of reusable coffee cups by 3.4%. Environmental messaging in cafes, for example posters about litter, increases the use of reusable coffee cups by 2.3%. The availability of reusable cups leads to an increase of 2.5% whereas the distribution of free reusable cups leads to a further increase of 4.3%.

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"While the increases for individual measures were modest, the greatest behavioural change was when the measures were combined," said Wouter Poortinga of Cardiff University.

(Source adapted from: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/mar/30/>)

