

Portland Business Journal - January 23, 2008

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PORTLAND BUSINESS JOURNAL

Wednesday, January 23, 2008

Whole Foods getting rid of plastic bags in all stores

Portland Business Journal

Whole Foods Market Inc. has expanded its ban on disposable plastic bags to include all of its 270 stores in the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom.

The company says its goal is to be plastic bag-free by Earth Day on April 22.

Whole Foods (NASDAQ: WFMI) is the first U.S. supermarket to commit to completely eliminating disposable plastic grocery bags. The company first eliminated disposable plastic grocery bags last year at stores in San Francisco, Toronto and Austin.

"Central to Whole Foods Market's core values is caring for our communities and the environment, and this includes adopting wise environmental practices," says A.C. Gallo, co-president and chief operating officer for Whole Foods. "More and more cities and countries are beginning to place serious restrictions on single-use plastic shopping bags since they don't break down in our landfills, can harm nature by clogging waterways and endangering wildlife, and litter our roadsides. We estimate we will keep 100 million new plastic grocery bags out of our environment between Earth Day and the end of this year alone."

Over the next three months, Whole Foods stores will reduce plastic grocery bag inventories and increase selections of reusable bags for purchase. The stores will encourage shoppers to bring their own bags by offering a refund of up to 10 cents. All the stores will continue to offer 100 percent recycled paper grocery bags.

Founded in 1980 in Austin, Whole Foods has more than 270 stores in the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom. Whole Foods has two stores in the Portland area and four **Wild Oats** stores in the area. The company had sales of \$6.6 billion in fiscal year 2007.

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