



## **The Styrofoam Ban– freeing our environment from a stranglehold**

On January 01, 2016, Guyana implemented a ban on the importation of expanded polystyrene which is commonly known by its brand name, Styrofoam. The ban is specific to products used by food services providers such as; food containers and plates, hot and cold beverage cups, meat and vegetable trays, egg cartons and other products made of expanded polystyrene used for selling or providing food. These non degradable materials end up on the street corner and because of their light weight are blown into the water ways, clogging drains, choking animals and robbing the country of its brilliance and beauty.



The move to ban this product it not one of an unprecedented nature, in fact, the petroleum-based plastic has gained a lot of negative attention in recent years around the world, prompting bans in many cities such as New York and Washington DC in the United States and even cities like Toronto in Canada and Muntinlupa in the Philippines. Haiti our sister CARICOM country has even taken this step. Guyana, like many countries around the world realized the importance of having a more environmentally sustainable economy for a better quality of life.

## **The environment cries out!**

Some may argue that Styrofoam keeps our food and beverage hot without burning our hands, but plastic foam – more commonly known as Styrofoam – is one of the most harmful materials around when it comes to the environment. Take a look around and you would notice that Styrofoam is a plague to our environment, floating like carcasses in our drains, canals and waterways and wreaking havoc. Like “pick-pocket” bandits, with no good intentions Styrofoam in its many shapes and forms is seen mingling and



lingering amongst busy shoppers and vendors in our market places. This culprit harms our health each time we invite it into our homes for a quick lunch or dinner, and harming our wildlife every time we let them go. We all dream of having a better life and sharing our beautiful country with the rest of the world but how can this be achieved, when cleaning the city alone costs us millions of dollars and even then

many garbage heaps still dot our city as an eyesore to us and others who come to our shores.

Like a stranglehold, Styrofoam latches itself around the neck of the environment, shortening its breath and its cries going fainter with each passing day. It is cheaper to use Styrofoam some might say, but can we truly put a price tag on the services that our environment provides everyday day or to fix the damages we have created? Like a mother the environment gives selflessly asking for nothing in return, but love and care.



We cannot continue to turn a blind eye to the needs of the environment and only focus on self gratification, balance must be struck between our needs and that of the environment. Surely, banning Styrofoam is not the answer to all our environmental

problems but it is a beginning, taking us one step closer to achieving good environmental conservation, protection and management practices for a greater Guyana.

***Share your ideas and questions by sending letters to: “Our Earth, Our Environment”, C/O EIT Division, Environmental Protection Agency, Ganges Street, Sophia, GEORGETOWN, or email us at: [eit.epaguyana@gmail.com](mailto:eit.epaguyana@gmail.com) or you can contact the Agency on 225-5467-9.***