

# The 3R's: Ecology on a daily basis

## Keep yourself informed, make simple choices and be aware !

- Reduce:** Reduction is minimizing the use of toxic and non-renewable components such as petrochemicals. Source Reduction is maximizing the use of renewable resources.
- Reuse:** A product must be used more than 300 times to be defined as reusable. Reuse minimizes landfill use thus reducing your carbon footprint.
- Recycle:** To recycle a product is to give it a second life by giving it a new its function. Research shows that only 1% of recyclable plastic bags are actually recycled.

## Jute and other types of bags: Ecological comparisons

### Jute Bags

Jute is an annually renewable natural fibre which mainly needs rainwater to grow. Hardly any fertilisers or pesticides are required. The growth of one hectare of jute absorbs 15 tons of CO<sup>2</sup> while releasing 11 tons of oxygen. Jute by-products are non-polluting; they are used to increase soil fertility and as a fuel. By nature, Jute respects the **3R's: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle**  
Source: International Jute Study Group

### Jute versus Paper Bags

Per hectare, jute produces 20 to 40 tons of fibre annually while tree farming yields 8 to 10 tons of fibre over a 10 to 14 year period. Thus we can say that jute plantations produce up to 56 times more fibre than tree plantations.  
Source: "International Commodity Organisation in Transition" published by United Nation Conference on Trade and Development, Inagaki, 2000, Liu, 2000

### Jute versus Cotton Bags

Cotton growing is one of the most polluting activities in the world. Although cotton growing takes up only 5% of USA farmland, it consumes more than 50% of all pesticides and fertilizers used in the USA. From planting to final assembly, it is estimated that a single cotton T-Shirt involves almost 1 litre of chemicals. Growing cotton also requires a great deal of water. Cotton farming is thought, for example, to be a major contributing factor to an 80% reduction in the size of the Aral Sea in Central Asia. Finally, cotton's single-crop farming methods are responsible for the impoverishment of much arable land.  
Source: Equicotton Study, [www.fibrethik.org](http://www.fibrethik.org)

### Jute versus reusable Plastic Bags\*

Yearly, the average north-American family uses 1,500 disposable plastic grocery bags. Yet, a typical plastic bag takes nature 400 to 1000 years to degrade.

Source: Worldwatch Institute, [www.worldwatch.org](http://www.worldwatch.org)

Polypropylene (PP) reusable\* plastic bags are the type used by most large chain stores because they are the most cost-efficient. They are reusable so that's a step in the right direction. But there is an environmental cost hidden in these bags!

Compared to jute, per ton, producing PP consumes 93% more energy, releases 5 times more waste including heavy metals, and emits 3.7 tons CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere.

Finally, these PP bags are said to be recyclable, and they are. But recycling plastic does not make sense economically. One ton of new plastic costs \$37.00 while 1 ton of recycled plastic costs \$400.00! This is the reason why only 1% of these bags are truly recycled.

Source: "International Commodity Organisation in Transition" published by United Nation Conference on Trade and Development

**\* By European standards, a product must be used more than 300 times to be defined as reusable.**

**As a consumer, apply the 3R's on a daily basis**  
**Info, tips and advice: [www.3recojute.com](http://www.3recojute.com)**

Certifications and affiliations:



Ecology in three words

