# UK consumers urged to switch to eco-friendly washing-up options to protect waterways by 2025



Everyday washing-up liquid, a staple in kitchens across the UK, has been spotlighted for its hidden environmental costs, prompting warnings for consumers to reconsider their choices by 2025. As the liquid is used and drained away, it threatens aquatic ecosystems due to the presence of harsh chemicals in its formulation. These chemicals, primarily surfactants derived from fossil fuels, do not simply vanish but linger in waterways, causing damage to marine life.

Washing-up liquids typically contain surfactants such as sodium lauryl sulphate (SLS), which reduces water’s surface tension to boost cleaning power and create foam. However, these compounds have toxic effects on aquatic organisms. Research published in the Journal of Applied Microbiology highlights how surfactants penetrate cell membranes of aquatic species, leading to significant damage including harm to fish gills and loss of sight. These effects underline the broader toxicity risks associated with household and industrial discharge of these substances into water bodies.

Adding to the environmental burden is the plastic packaging of washing-up liquids. The UK annually produces over 170 million tonnes of waste, yet less than a third of plastic packaging is recycled. Plastic bottles, including those for washing-up liquids, can persist in the environment for decades, with reports of bottles discovered on beaches after nearly 50 years without breaking down. This longevity exacerbates pollution and harms marine environments.

In response to these concerns, more sustainable alternatives are gaining traction. Brands like Fairy have introduced refillable cartons designed to reduce plastic waste by allowing consumers to refill existing bottles multiple times, cutting plastic use by up to 85%. These refills are recyclable, making them a more environmentally responsible choice. Consumers are also encouraged to consider solid washing-up bars, which are often plant-based and free from harmful chemicals, although their efficacy varies in different water types.

Environmental experts and retailers alike advocate shifting toward these eco-friendly options to mitigate the ongoing damage caused by conventional washing-up liquids. By opting for refillable, plant-based, or solid bars, consumers can help reduce both chemical pollution in waterways and the growing mountain of plastic waste. This change is seen as a crucial step to preserving marine life and protecting aquatic ecosystems from the cumulative impact of everyday cleaning practices.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2117416/warning-issued-anyone-buying-washing-up-liquid), [[5]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/uk-households-issued-fairy-liquid-warning-b1226136.html), [[4]](https://stories.jobaaj.com/news-updates/lifestyle/save-our-oceans-choose-eco-friendly-dish-soap-now)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2117416/warning-issued-anyone-buying-washing-up-liquid), [[3]](https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/international/us/washing-up-liquid-can-damage-aquatic-life-warns-study-on-surfactants-heres-why-its-usage-should-be-ceased/articleshow/120937764.cms), [[6]](https://www.karmactive.com/web-stories/washing-up-liquids-environmental-impact/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2117416/warning-issued-anyone-buying-washing-up-liquid), [[4]](https://stories.jobaaj.com/news-updates/lifestyle/save-our-oceans-choose-eco-friendly-dish-soap-now)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2117416/warning-issued-anyone-buying-washing-up-liquid), [[2]](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/home/environment/uk-warns-of-hidden-environmental-cost-of-liquid-soap/articleshow/118751890.cms), [[5]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/uk-households-issued-fairy-liquid-warning-b1226136.html)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2117416/warning-issued-anyone-buying-washing-up-liquid), [[2]](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/home/environment/uk-warns-of-hidden-environmental-cost-of-liquid-soap/articleshow/118751890.cms), [[4]](https://stories.jobaaj.com/news-updates/lifestyle/save-our-oceans-choose-eco-friendly-dish-soap-now), [[5]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/uk-households-issued-fairy-liquid-warning-b1226136.html)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2117416/warning-issued-anyone-buying-washing-up-liquid> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/home/environment/uk-warns-of-hidden-environmental-cost-of-liquid-soap/articleshow/118751890.cms> - The Times of India reports that millions of plastic bottles of washing-up liquid are used annually in the UK, leading to environmental harm due to their chemicals and plastic waste. Experts suggest opting for sustainable alternatives like solid bars and eco-friendly, refillable liquids to mitigate these impacts.
3. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/international/us/washing-up-liquid-can-damage-aquatic-life-warns-study-on-surfactants-heres-why-its-usage-should-be-ceased/articleshow/120937764.cms> - The Economic Times highlights a study published in the Journal of Applied Microbiology, which warns that washing-up liquid can damage aquatic life due to surfactants. The study emphasizes the need to cease the usage of such products to protect the environment.
4. <https://stories.jobaaj.com/news-updates/lifestyle/save-our-oceans-choose-eco-friendly-dish-soap-now> - Jobaaj Stories discusses the environmental impact of conventional dish soaps, which contain harmful surfactants damaging marine life. It urges consumers to switch to eco-friendly alternatives like refills or plant-based liquids to protect oceans and reduce plastic waste.
5. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/uk-households-issued-fairy-liquid-warning-b1226136.html> - The Standard reports that UK households have been issued a warning about their washing-up liquid. People are being urged to explore other options to lessen damage to marine life, as washing liquid contains surfactants that come from fossil fuels and can damage aquatic life each time the sink is drained.
6. <https://www.karmactive.com/web-stories/washing-up-liquids-environmental-impact/> - Karmactive discusses the environmental impact of washing-up liquids, highlighting that sodium lauryl sulphate (SLS), the foaming agent in most washing liquids, persists in water systems and endangers aquatic wildlife. Scientific research reveals surfactants in dishwashing products can penetrate fish cell membranes, causing gill damage and vision loss.
7. <https://washwild.com.au/blogs/news/the-downstream-effects-of-chemical-based-dish-and-laundry-wash-liquid> - Wash Wild explains that the washing liquid chosen for dishes and laundry can have a significant impact on the environment. Many commercial products contain chemicals known to be toxic to the environment, such as sulphates, triclosan, and phthalates, which can cause endocrine system disruption in fish and other aquatic organisms.