Microplastics in Snow

The study conducted by scientists at Germany's Alfred Wegener Institute and Switzerland's Institute for Snow and Avalanche Research has found that **microplastic particles can be transported tremendous distances through the atmosphere**.

Course of microplastics

- Every year, several million tonnes of plastic litter course through rivers and out to the oceans, where they are gradually **broken down into smaller fragments through the motion of waves and ultraviolet light of the sun**.
    - The smaller fragments less than five millimeters long are termed as microplastics.
- **Winds and thermal currents carry microplastics into the atmosphere** from the sea and land.
- Microplastics in the atmosphere are trapped by the clouds and the **falling snow**.
- Minute microplastic particles have been detected in the Arctic and the Alps. Samples from ice floes (sheet of floating ice) on the ocean between Greenland and Svalbard contained an average of 1,760 microplastic particles per litre.
- The team's hypothesis for airborne transportation builds on past research conducted on pollen, where experts confirmed that pollen from near the equator ends up in the Arctic.

Source: TH