

EU LEADERS AGREE ON A NEW PLASTICS TAX

The EU has finally reached agreement on a €750-billion coronavirus recovery package that also contains a new tax on plastic packaging waste.

The tax is to be introduced on 1 January 2021 and will take the form of "a national contribution calculated on the weight of non-recycled plastic packaging waste with a call rate of EUR 0.80 per kilogram with a mechanism to avoid excessively regressive impact on national contributions."

Proceeds from the tax will flow directly into the EU budget, forming a new 'own resource' fund. However, the use of the revenue from the plastics tax has drawn criticism, as it has been argued that it could have been harsher, will not be earmarked for measures relating to plastics waste, and will, say opponents, essentially have 'close to zero direct effect on the circular economy goals.



Germany to ban single-use plastics from July

Germany will ban the sale of single-use plastic straws, cotton buds and food containers from July next year. The decision is in line with the EU directive in which all plastics packaging placed on the market should be reusable or easily recycled.

The German Association of Local Utilities (VKU) estimates common plastic items make up around 10 to 20% of waste from parks, public places and streets with to-go packaging for food and beverages made from expanded polystyrene (EPS) having the largest share.



ALDI TO HALVE PLASTIC PACKAGING USE IN THE UK BY 2025

The new commitment will see 2.2 billion pieces of plastic removed from the supermarket's product lines over the next five years, most of which will be single-use. This is equivalent to 74,000 tonnes in weight.

Plastic wrapping on toilet rolls, for example, will be replaced with a paper alternative, and double lids will be removed from cream and yoghurts.



Aldi UK will also continue its phase-out of plastic trays on steak lines, replacing them with cardboard alternatives.

While the new target only covers Aldi's own-brand lines, third-party suppliers were warned earlier this year that they would be delisted unless they align with the supermarket's plastics packaging commitments.

Aside from plastics reduction, Aldi's plastics strategy binds the supermarket to ensure that all its own-brand plastics packaging is recyclable, reusable or compostable by 2022 and to halve packaging use by weight – regardless of material – by 2025.

Coca-Cola funds CuRe Technology for new rPET



Coca-Cola European Partners (CCEP) is funding start-up company CuRe Technology which seeks to provide a new lease of life to lower grade plastic PET waste which will eliminate virgin oil-based PET from its bottles within the next decade.

This will contribute to removing a total of over 200,000 tonnes of virgin oil-based PET from CCEP's packaging portfolio a year and support the transition to a circular economy for PET packaging.

It will initially apply its end-to-end partial depolymerisation recycling process to transform opaque and difficult to recycle (ODR) food grade PET to high quality recycled PET (rPET) that can be used again for food and drink packaging in one continuous process on the same site.



WRAP PUBLISHES NEW ROADMAP FOR FLEXIBLE PLASTIC PACKAGING

While the UK recycles 46.2 per cent of its plastic packaging, just four per cent of soft flexible plastic packaging is currently recycled, with few local authorities collecting it due to its composition of different types of plastic, making it hard to recycle.

Among the solutions proposed to increase the recycling rate for soft flexible plastic packaging are: designing packaging that can be recycled and sorted; investing in sorting and reprocessing facilities; and ensuring that recycled flexible packaging has strong end markets. In the short term, the roadmap emphasises capitalising on the store collection points provided by supermarkets. In the long term, kerbside collections of flexible packaging must be implemented in all local authority areas.



A study by the American Forest & Paper Association (AF&PA) found that the presence of grease and cheese, at levels typically found on pizza boxes, does not impact recycling in a negative way.

This means that consumers should not be concerned about grease or cheese; simply remove any leftover pizza and place the box in the recycle bin. This new guidance could dramatically increase the recycling rate of the 600 million takeaway boxes sold in the UK each year.



Tesco starts online refillable container trial

The trial, in partnership with Loop, covers 150 items, which will be delivered in reusable containers for which consumers pay a deposit.

After using the products, which include Heinz Ketchup, Persil washing liquid, Coca-Cola, and Danone yoghurt, customers will request for the empties to be picked up. These are then cleaned by hygiene and food safety firm Ecolab, in DHL warehouses, and then returned to be reused.

Customers could either return Loop packaging through Tesco, or through other retailers, to get a return on their deposit.

Diageo to launch 'world's first ever' paper-based spirits



Diageo has created what it claims is the "world's first ever" 100% plastic free paper-based spirits bottle, made entirely from sustainably sourced wood.

The bottle – which will debut with Johnnie Walker in early 2021 – has been created through a new partnership with Pilot Lite, a venture management company, to launch Pulpex Limited, a new sustainable packaging technology company.

To ensure that the technology can be used in every area of life, Pulpex Limited has established a partner consortium of major FMCG companies in non-competing categories including Unilever, and PepsiCo, with further partners expected to be announced later in the year.

The bottle is made from sustainably sourced pulp to meet food-safe standards and will be fully recyclable in standard waste streams.

The technology will allow brands to rethink their packaging designs, or move existing designs into paper, whilst not compromising on the existing quality of the product.

The packaging has been designed to contain a variety of liquid products and will form part of Diageo's commitment towards Goal 12 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals: 'Responsible Consumption and Production'.