

TOWARDS CIRCULARITY OF PET FOOD PACKAGING

What is Circularity?

- Circularity is the highest form of recycling
- All materials in a product can then be reused endlessly
- The loop is closed, no value is lost and there is no waste.

As the pet food industry, we believe that ensuring a high level of pet food safety and preventing waste should be central objectives in the transition towards a circular economy.

THE ROLE OF PET FOOD PACKAGING

Pet food packaging is critical to ensure pet food is kept safe and retains its nutritional quality as products move through the supply chain from factory to pet owners. Packaging also provides pet owners with important factual and legal information about the food they are purchasing for their pet.

To continue to offer pet owners a broad choice of products in convenient formats, pet food manufacturers use different kinds of packaging. This includes cans, pouches, alu-trays and bags. There are different materials used in formulating the packaging ranging from paper and cardboard to plastic and aluminium. Manufacturers carefully select the best option to ensure freshness, hygiene, safety, and sustainability.



CURRENT PACKAGING CHALLENGES FOR THE PET FOOD INDUSTRY

Different packaging materials face different challenges in terms of circularity.

Some materials, including some plastics, are already fully recyclable and the challenge is to ensure infrastructure is in place to collect, sort and recycle it, and that consumers dispose of the waste responsibly. For other materials, there is a need for innovation in recycling technology and sometimes redesign.

Furthermore, all packaging materials that are in contact with foodstuffs, including pet food, are subject to strict legislation to ensure safety. This naturally reduces the range of packaging materials available to pet food manufacturers.

Whilst there are challenges the pet food industry is working hard to deliver solutions and reduce the environmental impact of packaging.

SUSTAINABLE PACKAGING

The pet food industry has been making progress to reduce and optimise the use of packaging materials, find sustainable alternatives to non-recyclable plastic, and increase the use of recycled content. These efforts are part of our active contribution to tackling climate change and reducing waste.



CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE PET INDUSTRY

1. LIFE-CYCLE APPROACH

We support measures to reduce and improve packaging that are based on scientific evidence and follow a life-cycle approach, recognising the role of packaging to protect pet food safety and reduce waste.

2. DEFINITION FOR RECYCLABILITY

A number of innovations are taking place to simplify packaging in order to improve its recycling performance. There is a need for a common definition of recyclability, based on the potential of the packaging material to be recycled and considering existing and emerging technologies and infrastructure.

3. INFRASTRUCTURE FOR COLLECTION, SORTING & RECYCLING

The current lack of a suitable sorting and recycling infrastructure within the UK requires industry to export over 60% of existing collected material for recycling. This includes an absence of suitable non-mechanical recycling capacity to enable full recycling of plastic packaging into the required high value, food-safe, applications.

Whilst recent innovations have led to the development of 100% recyclable pouches, currently only 17% of UK councils collect and process this material. This is why the pet food industry actively supports the development of a well-functioning collection, sorting and recycling system. UK Pet Food is working with partners such as WRAP and FDF to help develop new approaches to facilitate this.

4. EXTENDED PRODUCER RESPONSIBILITY

Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) schemes are in place in a number of EU countries. Producers under these schemes are responsible for the management of waste, which includes the collection of used goods, sorting and treatment of their recycling. EPR schemes should be enhanced to increase packaging waste collection and sorting.



5. RECYCLED PLASTICS IN PET FOOD PACKAGING

Increasing recycled content of products is key for a circular economy. It is therefore necessary to ensure that recycled plastic materials for use in food contact packaging are safe and readily available to the pet food industry.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL CLAIMS

Product environmental claims should be transparent, reliable and, wherever possible, based on the Product Environmental Footprint methodologies. In 2018, FEDIAF developed the Product Environmental Footprint Category Rules (PEFCR) for pet food, which was endorsed by the European Commission. This officially adopted methodology gives clear guidelines for calculating the product environmental footprint of prepared pet food for cats and dogs - from 'cradle to grave'.

PACKAGING INNOVATION

Recent packaging innovations have led to the development of 100% recyclable pouches including 30% recycled content or 30% bio-based materials which are derived from sugarcane. Sugar cane is very sustainable, as for every tonne of plastic used, during the life of sugarcane it absorbs 3 tonnes of CO₂ from the atmosphere.

RAISING AWARENESS

UK Pet Food and our members will continue to advocate for education and awareness-raising campaigns as a crucial part of a long-term change in people's knowledge, attitudes and behaviours.

UK Pet Food supports awareness campaigns such as the annual Recycle Week in September.

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

UK Pet Food is a supporter of the WRAP UK Plastic Pact - a trail blazing, collaborative initiative bringing together businesses, NGOs and UK governments to create a circular economy for plastic by 2025. Through the work of the Pact, WRAP aims for 100% of plastic packaging to be reusable, recyclable, or compostable by 2025.



At www.ukpetfood.org you can read more about **member initiatives and progress so far** on our drive towards a circular economy for pet food packaging.

**THE UK
PLASTICS
PACT**

