

March 2020

European Tissue Symposium

Position on the sustainable use of packaging materials

Introduction

ETS is the European Tissue Paper Industry Association. Its members represent the majority of tissue paper producers throughout Europe and around 90% of the total European tissue production. ETS was founded in 1971 and is based in Brussels.

Summary

ETS members manufacture products that are essential for health and hygiene. The members are working hard to ensure the packaging used to protect the quality and integrity of its products is the most sustainable possible. ETS supports the use of scientific tools, such as LCA (Life Cycle Analysis), to ensure that all decisions on the use of materials, such as plastics, are based on sound science. It supports the work by the EU and by municipal, national and multi-national groups to minimise the impact of plastic and to increase the amount of recycling of used packaging. In the future, ETS hopes that cooperation at an international level will further minimise the environmental impact associated with the use of plastics in the supply chain.

Context: the importance of tissue products

ETS members manufacture products that are essential for health and hygiene. Production is predominantly focused on hygienic tissue paper that is commonly used in the manufacture of facial tissue, handkerchiefs, napkins, toilet tissue, household/Away From Home towels and wipes. Many tissue products are essential for the health and hygiene of consumers as they help to clean and dry the body. A number of national health authorities, for instance, recommend a 'Catch it Bin it Kill it' approach for viruses, where people are advised to catch a sneeze or a cough in a tissue and then bin it to avoid cross contamination.

In 2018 the industry produced 7.4* MT of hygienic paper, utilising sustainably sourced wood pulp and recovered fibre as the main raw materials. Packaging is essential to maintaining the quality, product safety and brand image of these products' In 2018, XX MT of packaging was used, primarily made from corrugated board and petroleum-based plastics.

ETS position on EU and UN sustainability programmes.

ETS and its members support the goals of the EU circular economy and the UN Environment Programme to minimise the impact of plastic on the environment.

The European tissue industry believes that the programmes of the EU and the UN to minimise the impact of plastic on the environment form an important part of the global work to achieve a sustainable future.

The EU's latest initiative, the 'Green Deal', targets a carbon neutral Europe by 2050 is an important step in this direction. Measures to reduce plastic use and to increase the recycling of the remaining plastic, triggered by the Green Deal, are welcomed by the tissue industry.

At a global level similar goals must be initiated to avoid exporting the problem to other economies or importing products that have a disproportionately high environmental burden.

ETS position on packaging

The tissue industry is looking for the most sustainable solution to package its products. ETS members will consider all options to meet their sustainability goals and to maintain the functional demands for packaging, needed to meet customer criteria related to hygiene and durability requirements of logistics. Plastic has many advantages for use as a material for packaging soft tissue paper products. It is light-weight and protects the products from moisture, dirt and damage during transport and warehousing. Plastic materials have also developed technically over recent years, enabling the use of lighter forms of plastic packaging that use less material. In addition, the plastic packaging used by the tissue industry is fully recyclable.

To meet further sustainability targets, the tissue industry is also investigating alternative biodegradable and fossil free packaging material instead of conventional fossil-based plastic. Currently, there are several tissue products that are packed in paper packaging on the market in Europe. The demand for alternatives to conventional fossil-based plastic has increased dramatically, and the European tissue industry in conjunction with packaging suppliers is now devoting substantial effort to resolving this issue. The European tissue industry is following these material developments closely and, when feasible, implementing them for the benefit of the environment.

ETS position on increasing the recycling of plastic packaging

In the European Union, recycling facilities are already widely in use and ETS supports the work by national and local governments to further improve the collection and reprocessing infrastructure to ensure all plastics are recycled. Plastic materials are a valuable raw material and should stay within the circle of recyclables as long as possible. This reduces the consumption of raw materials and minimises the impact on the environment. ETS recommends that all essential plastic materials are developed according to the "Design for Recycling" idea and are easy to recycle. ETS supports the establishment of suitable collection and sorting facilities in Europe so that waste can be turned into valuable commodities and fed back into the production cycle as raw materials. Furthermore, ETS is committed to making waste separation transparent and easy for consumers by providing appropriate information on plastic packaging.

ETS view on environmental assessment

ETS actively supports the use of environmental assessment tools such as Life Cycle Analysis (LCA) and product foot printing to help ensuring that products and their packaging are designed with the lowest environmental impacts. Reliable and accurate data about the environmental performance of products are an essential element in the environmental



decision-making process. In its Communication on Integrated Products, the European Commission concluded that Life Cycle Assessments (LCA) provide the best framework for assessing the potential environmental impacts of products currently available.

Many ETS member companies already use the life cycle approach as a tool to support choices regarding the environmental improvement of products and services.

Packaging is considered an integral part of tissue paper products. For this reason, ETS actively supports its members' goals to adopt solutions and materials that provide alternatives to traditional plastics. This done by using a comparative analysis based on the most recent and advanced LCA methods and identifying clear environmental advantages.

The Future:

ETS welcomes the strategy to increase cooperation through international organizations in order to address the issue of plastic packaging on a global scale.

ETS welcomes and strives to be an active partner in preparing a new strategy to reduce and minimise the global impacts of plastic packaging.

ETS believes that a stronger and effective solution will only be possible when bringing together citizens, local and national authorities, civil society and industry, working closely with the EU institutions and consultative bodies.

For more information, please contact:

Fanis Papakostas: tel. **30697231003**

Email: fanis.papakostas@europellantissue.com

www.europellantissue.com