
Response by ACE Ireland to DECC's Call for Expert Evidence - Climate Action Plan 2023

Tuesday, 20th September 2022

Introduction

The Alliance for Beverage Cartons and the Environment Ireland, ACE Ireland represents Tetra Pak, Elopak and SIG Combibloc, the leading manufacturers of beverage cartons for the Irish and European markets.

ACE delivers sector-wide environmental initiatives on behalf of its members whilst providing a platform for the industry to profile and benchmark cartons as a renewable, recyclable, and low carbon packaging choice.

ACE Ireland is keen to play its part in achieving more and better recycling to help reduce waste impacts and ensure a recycling culture is created in Ireland, where the default course of action by consumers is to recycle rather than dispose of, and to support Ireland's transition towards a Circular Economy.

Responses to consultation questions – Waste and the Circular Economy

1.0 What are the main barriers to consumers embracing the Circular Economy, e.g., lack of awareness, increased costs compared to disposable products, lack of access to circular goods and services?

A key barrier to consumers embracing the Circular Economy is a lack of awareness of what packaging can be recycled through their kerbside collection service, and of the advantages of packaging in reducing food waste.

The key focus must be placed on the continued roll-out of extensive citizen information campaigns for clear and concise messaging to resonate with the public on what a Circular Economy means and how they can support it. As part of this, particular focus must be placed on increasing the presentation rates of recyclable materials, by continuing to highlight what can be placed in the mixed dry recycling bin. Beverage cartons should be included in such campaign messaging.

Consumers should also be informed about the importance of using low-carbon, renewable materials. As part of the beverage carton industry's 'Roadmap to 2030 and Beyond', ACE Ireland members are committed to making packaging only from renewable and/or recycled material by 2030, and today 100% of the wood fibre used to make beverage cartons is sourced sustainably and chain of custody certified, ensuring the forests remain a renewable resource for generations to come.

Greater emphasis should also be placed in communications on the role that packaging plays in reducing food waste and therefore in reducing carbon impacts – particularly packaging that is low-impact in itself, low plastic and circular, such as beverage cartons.

The 'Roadmap to 2030 and Beyond' sets out the industry's vision to deliver the most sustainable packaging for resilient food supply systems which is renewable, climate positive and circular. The Roadmap commits to action on all parts of the industry value chain, with increased targets of beverage carton collection rates of 90% and recycling rates of 70% by 2030.

2.0 What other opportunities exist to support decarbonisation through the acceleration of a transition to the circular economy?

ACE Ireland continues to advocate for continued investment in and improvement of Ireland's recycling infrastructure and sorting technology in Irish material recovery facilities (MRFs). At present, beverage

cartons used by Irish consumers are placed into the domestic recycling bin, are collected at kerb side and brought to Irish MRFs for sorting.

ACE has been actively working with Ireland's major MRFs to find a solution for sorting cartons into a single stream, rather than including them in mixed paper and fibre streams as is currently the case. This would give full transparency and would mean that all components of cartons can then be fully recycled in a specialist facility like the dedicated beverage carton plant in Halifax, UK.

In June 2020, ACE Ireland established a beverage carton sorting trial with Forge Hill Recycling in Cork to demonstrate that cartons could be sorted separately without disrupting existing lines in the MRF. The consensus from all parties involved was that the trial was a success, and that dedicated sorting is the correct approach for the industry to take to ensure beverage cartons are fully recycled, while at the same time increasing the quality of Ireland's mixed fibre stream.

As part of Ireland's plan to transition to a Circular Economy, greater focus should be placed on supporting more sorting infrastructure and technology in Irish MRFs to ensure dedicated sorting of all recyclable materials including beverage cartons. Further investment in this area will accelerate the transition to a more Circular Economy and help Ireland meet EU recycling targets.

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