

June 2019

Key theme of FachPack 2019 – “Environmentally friendly packaging” – Article series, part 3 of 4

### **Circular economy par excellence – multi-use packaging and systems**

The key theme of the FachPack 2019 trade fair (24 to 26 September in Nuremberg) is “Environmentally friendly packaging”. The primary reasons for choosing this theme are the popularity of environmentally friendly packaging with consumers and of course stricter requirements for recyclability under the amended German Packaging Act. During FachPack, the theme will be reflected in the exhibition booths of many exhibitors and will also be raised during presentation forums, at special shows, and when awarding prizes. A series of four articles in months preceding the trade fair highlights current trends in recycled packaging, materials to conserve resources, multi-use packaging and systems, and environmentally sound (new) processes. This is part 3 of 4.

German end consumers will be familiar with multi-use packaging mainly in the area of drinks, where glass and PET bottles are often re-used to save on resources. Out of view of the consumer, the logistics sector is also making major advances in this area. At FachPack, exhibitors will demonstrate how successful multiple-use strategies work and can also be perfectly incorporated into process digitalisation. [See the list of exhibitors for an overview of all the exhibitors at FachPack.](#)

#### **Foodstuffs too: multi-use is catching on**

There is growing political pressure to increase the proportion of drink bottles being re-used. The Federal Ministry for the Environment (BMU) has set a policy target of 70 percent re-use for drink packaging. For beer bottles the proportion is already a steady 80 percent. Extending the deposit system to include fruit juice spritzers is intended to achieve a higher proportion of re-use in this area too. And from [the beginning of](#)\* 2019, clear labelling is

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required to show whether glass packaging is disposable or re-usable. This requirement is part of a 5-point plan\* by the BMU, and is one way in which the ministry aims to bolster multi-use systems and make the use of packaging more sustainable overall.

The goal is to encourage multi-use systems across the board. After all, the benefits for the environment are obvious: multi-use bottles can be refilled up to 50 times, which helps to avoid waste and also saves resources. From a sustainability perspective, it is irrelevant whether the bottles are glass or PET. The closed loop system and separated recycling put reusable PET bottles at the top of the class among plastic packaging.

In other areas, however, there is still room for improvement: retailers usually pack loose fruit and vegetables in lightweight plastic bags, for example. REWE is the first major foodstuff retailer to trial the use of re-usable nets. These are available in twin packs and can be used repeatedly for fruit and vegetable purchases. They come with special bar codes that will automatically deduct the weight of the net at the check-out, for example. EDEKA is also aiming to reduce the use of disposable packaging by bringing in re-usable containers for sausages and cheese at the service counter. Away from the shelves, however, multi-use is well established. Wholesalers and retailers have fully matured multi-use systems in place for their logistics processes.

### **Not new but more and more successful: multi-use systems in logistics**

For the logistics processes used in trade and industry, the benefits of multi-use transport packaging can be enjoyed to the full, since they lend themselves perfectly to incorporation in loop systems. Pallets, containers and barrels are stable and reduce the use of disposable transportation packaging thanks to their long service lives. One factor making for smooth use is standardisation, as initiated by GS1's Centre of Competence for Multi-use Transport Packaging, for example. This platform enables manufacturers of load transfer devices, pooling services and users to establish uniform standards and create greater transparency in the implementation of multi-use systems. This will make the charging and exchange process for multi-use transport packaging easier.

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\* Available in German only

Digitalisation also assists with the development of new multi-use solutions. Equipping the load transfer devices with QR codes, for example, makes the return process chain more transparent. This system enables multi-use crates to be returned to the service firm unsorted as part of the Euro Pool System. Retail group Kaufland uses this system for its fruit and vegetable crates. Fresh products remain in the crates from the producer to the distribution centre, and also for product presentation in the market. This means retailers in the European logistics chain can largely avoid the use of disposable boxes.

### **Smooth processes in industry and retail**

For its internal and external logistics processes, the manufacturing industry can choose from a wide range of sustainable multi-use options. Exhibitors at FachPack have the right packaging solutions available for materials handling, transport of components and even liquids. Transport and storage containers stand out not only on account of their lengthy service lives, but also and increasingly thanks to the smart functions they offer. Codes and RFID technology make them an important element in networked production in smart factories. Multi-use packaging is thus very well prepared for the future from an environmental perspective.

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