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Key theme of FachPack 2019 – “Environmentally friendly packaging” – Article series, part 2 of 4

## Less is more: Eco-Friendly Packaging

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 2 of 4.

There are many ways to make packaging more sustainable. Paper manufacturers score by using renewable resources to make their products. Plastics makers or suppliers of aluminium packaging point to massive reductions in the amount of material used in their products and the improved recyclability of the materials they contain. There’s no Holy Grail for manufacturers: They must make individual decisions based on their products and any logistics-related constraints. Come to FachPack to find out what the market has to offer. Here’s a preview of some of the major trends.

The need to consume less energy and fewer materials and also to save money is self-evident to most companies in the packaging industry. This pertains to both their own production processes and the solutions they offer their customers. A more sustainable material mix and a substantial reduction in the amount of materials used over the past few years have greatly improved the sustainability of packaging. In its 2018 sustainability report, the plastic packaging association IK Industrievereinigung Kunststoffverpackungen e.V., which is regularly seen in Nuremberg, points out that plastic packaging has gotten 25 percent lighter since 1991. CO2

**Veranstalter  
Organizer**  
NürnbergMesse GmbH  
Messezentrum  
90471 Nürnberg  
Germany  
T +49 9 11 86 06-0  
F +49 9 11 86 06-82 28  
fachpack@nuernbergmesse.de  
www.fachpack.de

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Chairman of the Supervisory Board**  
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**Geschäftsführer  
CEOs**  
Dr. Roland Fleck, Peter Ottmann

**Registergericht  
Registration Number**  
HRB 761 Nürnberg

emissions were about 2.6 million tonnes lower in 2013, thanks to improvements made since 1991 in the efficiency of the materials contained in plastic packaging. Tinplate\* is also 60 percent thinner today than it was 40 years ago.

### **Using fewer materials without sacrificing quality**

Besides producing less waste, using less material also makes a major contribution to the efficient use of resources. Lower weight means less to store and transport. The same applies to packaging goods for transport. Wood is a renewable resource with a good CO2 balance. Plastic pallets are also light and permit a higher net loading capacity during transport – which has a positive impact on their carbon footprint. Plastic pallets can also be recycled at the end of their useful lives to produce new pallets.

### **Raw materials on the doorstep**

Using renewables is another way to improve the sustainability of packaging. Paper-based packaging with functional layers is also very well suited for food. The composite paper material can easily be channelled to the recycling process after use. Consumers associate paper packaging with environmental friendliness and high-quality natural contents, as the Meckenheimer tea retailer TeeGschwendner well knows. For its products, it has chosen a high-barrier paper by Sappi that requires no additional special coatings or lamination. The barrier paper offers TeeGschwendner another advantage, because the functional paper contains 88 percent FSC-certified paper. Certifications like PEFC and FSC ensure that the material has been responsibly sourced and processed.

One renewable resource that hasn't received much attention until recently is growing practically right on the doorstep: grass. Packaging made of 100 percent grass or containing a certain proportion of it gains points for being fast-growing and also for generating few emissions because it's produced locally. The material is already very popular for filling hollow spaces when shipping parcels. Grass paper is being used to make trays for fruit and veg, egg cartons and muesli packages, and even packaging for lip balm. To-go coffee cups are often criticised, but even their carbon footprint improves when they're made of grass paper.

**The material mix is what counts**

Exhibitors at FachPack are obviously well aware that focusing on a specific raw material doesn't offer long-term sustainability. The industry has become more adept at conserving resources, thanks to improved material mixes and new potential applications. Manufacturers of packaging material are doing their part, and so are the machine makers -by offering greater flexibility in handling various kinds of packages. This gives customers greater choice when developing their own sustainable packaging concepts.

**Contact for press and media FachPack**

Katja Feeß, Ruth Cuya

T +49 911 86 06-87 19

F +49 911 86 06-12 87 19

ruth.cuya@nuernbergmesse.de

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