



Recyclate Initiative from Werner & Mertz Succeeds in Field Test

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With the increasing ecological orientation in detergents and cleaning products, packaging concepts are moving into the focus of product evaluations. In 2012, the Mainz-based company Werner & Mertz, known for its brands FROSCHE, Erdal and Green Care, created the Recyclate Initiative. The objective of the initiative is to put PET packaging into a closed recycling loop and utilize PET waste from the Yellow Bag collection as a valuable secondary raw material.



Frosch product range by Werner & Mertz

Consumers have reacted positively, according to results from extensive testing conducted by Werner & Mertz in the food retail sector since 2014. "So far we have sold some 500,000 rPET bottles of FROSCHE dishwashing detergent made of twenty percent PET from the Yellow Bag and have not received one consumer complaint," said Reinhard Schneider, CEO of Werner & Mertz and the initiator of the Recyclate Initiative.



Schneider sees the Recyclate Initiative as an investment in the future. "An important part of our sustainability strategy," he said, "is designing packaging with 'maximum' sustainability." Today Werner & Mertz uses absolutely no "virgin" material and markets only bottles made of 100% recyclates. By the end of 2015, all transparent PET bottles will be made of 100% rPET, 80% of which comes from deposit bottle collection and 20% from the Yellow Bag.



Reinhard Schneider, Werner & Mertz CEO and initiator of the Recyclate Initiative

In future the Mainz-based eco pioneer intends to increase gradually the proportion of rPET from the Yellow Bag. The company's plans extend beyond PET packaging. In the Werner & Mertz Professional Line, HDPE (High Density Polyethylene) containers are used. There the manufacturer has succeeded in integrating 30% "post-consumer recyclates" in the packaging of Green Care products, the maximum that's now technically feasible. "Where other companies boast of having a vision, we can already report successful implementation," said Schneider. "In matters of sustainability, we take action while others are still planning. We are committed to pursuing this approach with HDPE too." As a follow-up to the success with 1000-milliliter bottles, experiments are being conducted with five-liter HDPE canisters made of 30% recyclates – with, of course, the same quality as before.

The award-winning Recyclate Initiative is concerned with keeping distributors and manufacturers interested in effective and sustainable recycling and in expanding the cooperation. "The Recyclate Initiative is based on the idea of 'open innovation', which means that everyone gets access to available technology with the goal of winning over other participants in the innovation process," said Schneider. "The private label manufacturer Beromin, for example, came onboard in May."

Project partners include the dual system Green Dot (DSD), the packaging company Alpla, the German Society for the Preservation of Nature (NABU), the retail group REWE and Unisensor, the manufacturer of sensor systems. Politicians are also expected to make a contribution by offering financial incentives for greater exploitation of the potential in one million tons of used plastic from the Yellow Bag collection system or by drafting corresponding regulations for the planned recycling materials legislation.



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