



Werner & Mertz demands more thought to real material cycles

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At G7, Reinhard Schneider, Managing Partner of Werner & Mertz and Initiator of the Recyclate Initiative, pled for more thought to real material cycles. Photos: Sabeth Stickforth / Werner & Mertz

Before an international audience, Schneider, the sole representative of German industry at the Resource Efficiency workshop, presented the Recyclate Initiative, which the Mainz manufacturer of cleaning and care products gave as a cross-industry "best-practice" example in matters of sustainability. "Incentives – such as a reduction in DSD fees for packaging that's recyclable, and even more importantly, for packaging containing recyclates – could open the way for investment in processing technology that makes incineration of plastic unnecessary," said Schneider. "For so-called 'thermal recycling' is unacceptable in the pursuit of sustainability," he added, making clear his opinion of conventional practices in waste management. Schneider participated in the G7 Workshop, which followed the G7 Summit, at the invitation of the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy.



Impression of the G7 Resource Efficiency Workshop: Companies from seven countries gave examples of pioneering achievements and corporate responsibility. The German representative was Werner & Mertz of Mainz. Photos: Sabeth Stickforth / Werner & Mertz

The Recyclate Initiative provides a way to exploit the previously untapped potential of the Yellow Bag as a source for the recycling of post-consumer PET packaging materials, according to Schneider. Thanks to innovative laser technology from UNISENSOR, the Karlsruhe-based manufacturer of sensor systems, Werner & Mertz has succeeded in fractionating packaging material from used PET packaging into very fine components to obtain pure PET recyclates. As the resulting resilient secondary raw material is reusable, it remains in a closed loop. "Transparent PET lends itself perfectly to repeated recycling at a very high level," said Schneider and encouraged other companies to become involved in the Recyclate Initiative. "This is an opportunity you should not miss." To date, the REWE Group, the packaging manufacturer ALPLA, DSD Duales System Deutschland and the nature conservation organization NABU have participated in the initiative. The partners bundle their expertise and advocate increased use of new technologies such as fine sorting with lasers in the industrial manufacturing of packaging.

"If new sorting technologies soon become economically worthwhile, there is a real chance that outside of Germany too, plastic packaging will no longer be incinerated or dumped," Schneider told the international guests. "Consequently, the discharge of plastic debris into the world's oceans can be reduced significantly. A similar development occurred years ago with aluminum. It is a well-known fact around the world that recycling of aluminum packaging is financially worthwhile because it can be done without any loss of quality." Thus far the Recyclate Initiative has received several prizes, including last year's Federal Ecodesign Award.

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