



Worldwide Innovation: Werner & Mertz debuts 100% HDPE Recyclates

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The Werner & Mertz Recyclate Initiative has reached another noteworthy milestone. After the sensational success with more than 15 million clear plastic bottles made of 100% recycled PET, with 20% from the Yellow Bag, Werner & Mertz GmbH has taken a further step to focus on polyethylene (PE) packaging.

Werner & Mertz, in cooperation with bottle producer Alpla-Werke Alwin Lehner GmbH & Co KG and the Green Dot, has now developed and manufactured innovative bottles for cleaning products from recycled plastic obtained from the Yellow Bag.

In recognition of this achievement, Werner & Mertz has been named the winner of this year's German Packaging Award in the category "Sustainability". In the announcement on 18 August, the Germany Packaging Institute (dvi) praised the pioneering work in real recycling and conservation of finite resources and the packaging bottles which look almost identical to those made from virgin material. The independent jury also appreciated the way the original appearance and quality of the bottles has been maintained without compromising product safety. The awards ceremony will take place during the FachPack trade fair in Nuremberg on 27 September.



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According to dvi, "The remarkable thing is that up to now, no translucent and white material has ever been produced from recyclable domestic refuse. Conventional PE recycles do not achieve those qualities."

The challenge in the development process was to identify the PE among the old plastic in the Yellow Bag which satisfies the physical and technological specifications of the demanding extrusion blow molding production process and the quality requirements for packaging function and appearance. A translucent material was needed that would allow the consumer to see the fill-level of the product.

The PE recycles in the market do not fulfill this requirement. As a matter of fact, the gray discoloration of the material is simply covered up with dark dyes. The declared goal of the Recyclate Initiative, however, is to forego use of dyes and thus achieve recyclability and



genuine recycling. Until recently the Yellow Bag did not yield material for high-quality reuse. With improved color sorting, it is now possible to obtain recycled PE flakes in natural colors and white. An improved washing process and an integrated decontamination step are further important developments in the manufacture of high-quality rPE packaging. Werner & Mertz and its development partners have produced not just simple bottle shapes, but also highly stable containers equipped with handles made of 100% recyclates.

"We strive to answer the question of how to make a sustainable way of life feasible for most people," said Reinhard Schneider, the owner of Werner & Mertz and initiator of the Recycling Initiative. "Resolving the apparent contradiction between ecology and the effectiveness of cleaning products is our main concern. In concrete terms, we want to be one step ahead of ecological benchmarks in all essential elements of our products, i.e., formulas, packaging and production. With our newest development in PE packaging from post-consumer recyclates, we show what genuine recyclability looks like. We are creating real solutions where other companies claim to have visions or simply make promises."

Photo: Werner & Mertz

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