



The right recycling to protect our oceans!

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At Our Ocean Conference 2018 on Bali Werner & Mertz signed the Ellen MacArthur Foundation New Plastics Economy Global Commitment to eliminate plastic waste and marine litter. The Mainz-based company thereby pledged to convert all packaging to 100 percent recycles by 2025.

Among the signatories of the global commitment were corporations, non-governmental organizations, political decision makers and individuals. Reinhard Schneider, managing partner of Werner & Mertz, applauded the joint action against plastic waste. "A global alliance to eliminate plastic waste was long overdue. It pleases me all the more that the Ellen MacArthur Foundation was able to recruit so many renowned players for this binding commitment. If plastic waste is collected after use by end-consumers and recycled for high-quality re-use, together we will be able to keep plastic from entering the fragile eco system of the ocean."



from the left: ALPLA CEO Günther Lehner, Ellen MacArthur, Reinhard Schneider, CEO Werner & Mertz, Erik Solheim, Executive Director of UN Environment Photo: Werner & Mertz



Recyclate Initiative has a model role

The Recyclate Initiative from Werner & Mertz is showing how a medium-sized company can implement a successful circular economy and act as a role model in solving the global problem of plastic marine litter.

"We are following a genuine closed-loop principle with the goal of eliminating petroleum in the production of plastic packaging and processing instead materials from the "Yellow Bag" in such a way that they can be used for food-grade packaging. Right now we are the world's leading brand manufacturer of 100 percent recycled plastic packaging," says Reinhard Schneider, owner of Werner & Mertz and the pioneer behind the Recyclate Initiative.

With 215 million PET packaging units of 100 percent used plastic with a share of 20 percent recyclates from the Yellow Bag, the Recyclate Initiative has impressively proven that it is possible to bring to the market high-quality packaging of recycled plastic which is produced with 79 percent lower CO₂ emissions than packaging made from virgin material. From the beginning of the Recyclate Initiative up to October 2018, 11,971 tons of CO₂ have been saved. (Alpla Study, Denkstatt, Vienna 2017)

One hundred percent recycled plastic packaging for more than 80 percent of its products qualifies Werner & Mertz as the world's leading pioneer in the New Plastics Economy. The company promises a complete recycled packaging portfolio – 100% from 100% recycled plastic – by 2025!

The solution is on the land, not in the ocean

The Frosch brand and its parent company, family-owned Werner & Mertz, are working with Recyclate Initiative partners from industry, trade and NGOs, to do the right things right. That means the plastic waste which accumulates daily in consumers' homes is re-used to make new packaging. Plastic should not simply be burned or – even worse – allowed to pollute the oceans. According to IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature), Europe is not the main polluter of the world's oceans with plastic, but the community can be a role model in protecting global waters without having to rely on combustion with high CO₂ emissions.

The Recyclate Initiative represents an important step toward this international goal by making progress in developing closed systems for production, use and genuine recycling of plastic packaging without any loss of quality. The Initiative also raises public consciousness of the need to fight the direct causes and not just the symptoms of marine pollution. The solution can be found only on land and not in the ocean.

Activities such as using marine litter and beach plastic in packaging and clothing attract attention, but do not get at the root causes. Only an effective circular economy for plastics can prevent additional plastic waste from being pushed into the ocean.

Transparency for the end consumer is a basic credo espoused by the Recyclate Initiative. The origin of raw materials that go into recycled packaging is disclosed. "We believe that only genuine post-consumer recyclates deserve the name 'recycled plastic'," says Schneider. The consumer correctly connects the term "recyclate" to a material that comes from the post-consumer flow, that is, from a familiar and existing household waste collection system for plastic like the Yellow Bag or the deposit bottle system.



Post-industrial "recyclates" is not genuine packaging waste

Unfortunately, the consumers' trust is now being put to the test, Schneider says. The recycled packaging made from packaging waste now offered in the retail market does not consist only of plastic waste from private households. Often included is plastic waste (e.g., regrind, rework, scrap) from industry which some refer to as "recyclates" but is more commonly known as "post-industrial recycled content".

The recycled content is plastic which has not gone through a usage phase but instead has been re-used by the packaging manufacturer to reduce material waste during the production process. Consequently, it is highly unlikely that the post-industrial material stream ends up in the environment. Because the content is generally single-source material with a high re-use value, this type of waste is even traded. That means that post-industrial recycled content is currently re-used by manufacturers for economic reasons alone. It also means, however, that post-industrial recycled content hardly contributes to reducing the total amount of plastic waste – and does not contribute at all once the material gets to the end consumer, where the potential is highest.

If the recycled content is resold as plastic flakes and thereby removed from the manufacturer's own supply chain, the industrial waste and products made from that waste are no longer called "post-industrial recycled content" but – like used plastic from private households – may be labeled simply "packaging waste". The post-industrial recycled content that finds its way to the consumer is actually disposable plastic with a new name. It's true that it can be recycled effectively, but that means someone has to do it. Right now that is not being done, at least not by the parties that put the material into circulation. On the contrary, they continue to add new recycled content to the mountain of plastic instead of recycling used plastic. The source of recyclable material which is so important is consciously ignored even though it has the greatest potential.

Inefficient production processes are incorrectly elevated to a privileged status when post-industrial recycled content is given the value of recyclates, warns the New Plastic Economy. The Recyclate Initiative banks on the right used plastic with the greatest benefit for environmental protection and wishes that all manufacturers will seize the opportunity to make a future without plastic litter in the oceans – with the New Plastics Economy.

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