



For the first time from the Yellow Bag: Basket for toilet freshener!

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The Recyclate Initiative is once again a role model in recycling. In a joint project with The Green Dot and the affiliated companies Dannemann Global Extrusion and Berner Kunststofftechnik, Werner & Mertz has developed a toilet freshener basket made from recycled PET trays obtained from the Yellow Bag household waste collection system. Other attempts have been made in the past – Werner & Mertz will soon bring the first concrete product to the market. An absolute innovation!



Photo: Werner & Mertz

Now previously unused PET trays will be put into closed-loop recycling system

Trays of PET are used mostly for the packaging of foodstuffs like fruits, vegetables, cheese and cold cuts. Although a great quantity of PET trays can be found in the Yellow Bag, in the past they were incinerated because their recycling was difficult and hardly anyone wanted to buy the secondary raw material that recycling yielded. For PET trays are not always made of a mono-material, but rather of multi-layer packaging, whose plastic complexity impairs the color and transparency of the secondary raw material. All those factors make the trays difficult or impossible to recycle.



The basket for the toilet freshener from Werner & Mertz currently is made of 100 percent used plastic from PET bottles. Now the cleaning products manufacturer is converting to recycled PET trays and satisfying its self-imposed standard of putting as much previously untapped material from the Yellow Bag as possible into its packaging and thus into a closed-loop system.

Tray-to-tray recycling becomes a reality

The cooperation partner The Green Dot takes an innovative approach to processing the material. Up until now the mono-layer PET packaging was not separated from the multi-layer packaging and that fraction also was thermally recycled. The Green Dot, on the other hand, automatically separates the different types of packaging at the article level in several sorting cascades which yield a high-quality PET tray fraction. That fraction is then processed into flakes and sorted again.

"Together with Werner & Mertz we have succeeded in closing the loop for yet another material which previously was not available for recycling," said Dr. Markus Helftewes, managing director of The Green Dot. "Werner & Mertz proves again to be a pioneer and along with us brings material from the retail shelf back to the retail shelf."

From the flakes Dannemann Global Extrusion then produces the raw sheets from which Berner Kunststofftechnik forms the baskets for the toilet freshener. "As a plastics manufacturer we are happy to take up the challenge and the role of pioneer in recycling," said Philipp Brandt, head of Sales for the two affiliated companies. "The preparation and processing of bottle flakes are widespread, state-of-the-art practices. The further processing of PET fractions from household waste prompted us to rethink how we could offer consistently high quality. And that's exactly what we've accomplished."

Because the basket for the toilet freshener is made of PET trays only, it falls into that category and after its use is completely recyclable. Theoretically, a basket can become a new basket over and over (tray-to-tray recycling).

"We're eager to see how other attempts will turn out and we're looking forward to launching the basket of recycled PET trays on the market and showing once again that as a sustainability pioneer, we use all recycling possibilities," said Immo Sander, Head of Packaging Development at Werner & Mertz.

Concrete implementation of the new packaging law

With this project the cooperation partners are satisfying the concrete requirements of the new packaging law with concrete implementations. The new law, which went into effect on 1 January 2019, stipulates higher recycling rates, starting in this year with an increase in material recycling of plastic from 36 to 58.5 percent. As of 2022 the rate will be 63 percent. "Material utilization" means the use in new products such as packaging or consumer goods like the toilet freshener basket made of PET trays. Satisfying the prescribed rates while maintaining the supply of recyclates will mean that PET trays too have to be recycled in the future.



"We began working on the joint project long before the packaging law went into effect. Now we hope that our innovation will give both companies and consumers the assurance that recycling rates can be met if they have the courage and will to leave the beaten path and embrace new opportunities," said Sander.

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