

A host of UK packaging organisations have called for more recycling collection points, tax reliefs for recycled content and a universal list of acceptable materials as part of a desired regulation reform to make it easier for consumers to recycle packaging waste. EURACTIV's media partner edie.net reports.

The group, which includes WRAP, the Industry Council for Packaging and the Environment and Defra's Advisory Committee on Packaging, published its list of agreed recommendations last week, including the call for an introduction of a universal list telling brands what is and what is not deemed recyclable. According to the group, this would allow packaging to be labelled "more clearly and consistently" for the benefit of consumers.

Another headline recommendation is uniform recycling collections across all local authorities in the UK, which the group claims will enable the reuse of waste streams and encourage higher plastic recycling rates than the current proportion of just 38% nationwide. The recommendation report was published following discussion with environment secretary Michael Gove, in December last year. Responding to the list of recommendations, which additionally includes a call for the government to consider measures such as virgin material taxes and tax relief on recycled plastics to create markets for secondary materials, Gove said in a letter that his team are developing "specific models" for a packaging-extended producer responsibility scheme, which will be discussed in Parliament later this year alongside the team's deposit return scheme proposals.

"We were delighted with the rich and fruitful discussions across the whole packaging chain and the participants' genuine commitment to radical reform," WRAP's chief executive Marcus Glover said. "The Secretary of State's response is very encouraging, and I am particularly pleased to see his commitment to accelerating the move to uniform recycling collections, as this supports a key area of work for WRAP."

The trio of packaging specialists are additionally calling on the government to introduce stronger compliance monitoring and enforcement by the Environment Agency in a bid to eliminate contaminated plastics from packaging and require packaging producers to do more to encourage consumers to recycle. Their list of recommendations concludes with a suggestion that the government should appoint an independent arbiter to enable the sanctions.

Cross-sector discussions

The list of packaging reform recommendations were the result of discussions between more than 170 organisations, including big-name supermarkets like Waitrose, Aldi, Asda and Iceland; drinks companies such as Coca-Cola, Britvic and Nestle; food retailers like Pret A Manger and McDonalds; several local authorities and a handful of NGOs including

Greenpeace.

Many of these companies have already signed up to WRAP's government-backed Plastics Pact, which provides its signatories with an ongoing target of making their plastic packaging 100% reusable, recyclable or compostable in a bid to "eliminate unnecessary plastic waste".

Since the start of the year, both the UK Government and the European Union have unveiled sweeping strategies that aim to phase-out use of certain types of plastic by 2030 - for the EU - and 2042 for the UK. This came hot off the heels of a decision to consult on a nationwide deposit return scheme for plastic containers and more recently, the government announced its ambitions to "eliminate" single-use plastics from Parliament by 2019.

Following the announcement of the reform recommendations, Glover added that the government's ability to alter packaging policy and therefore underpin the commitments made by business so far will be "key" to WRAP achieving the aims of its Plastics Pact.

Source: euractiv.com