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PRESS STATEMENT - Flexible Packaging Initiative

Food companies pledge for increased investments in a Circular Economy for flexible plastic packaging

- Participants to the Flexible packaging Initiative have committed to increasing investment and providing support for a series of public policy interventions to accelerate the transition toward a circular economy for flexible packaging across Europe.
- The Initiative is open and was started by five companies: Mars, Mondelēz International, Nestlé, PepsiCo and Unilever.
- Flexible Packaging account for 44% of the total post-consumer packaging waste in EU, while packaging 66% of the total products volumes.

[Brussels, 01 March 2022] The five companies support a circular economy for flexible packaging built on the principles of resource efficiency, prevention of waste and pollution, and lowering the overall environmental impact of the packaging. Individually these companies are reviewing packaging designs with the aim to reduce packaging materials, improve recyclability and increase the use of recycled and renewable content¹. To ensure packaging materials are kept within the economy, the companies aim to improve recycling infrastructure and uptake of recycled materials². Innovative packaging designs and solutions, as well as working with partners and governmental bodies to improve infrastructure, will lead to a world with less waste.

Flexible packaging is highly efficient as it is able to pack a relatively large amount of product while being low in weight which minimizes carbon emissions, whilst providing various benefits, including product protection, preservation and quality assurance. However, currently, flexible packaging is not yet widely recycled. To lead the transition toward boosting recycling, participants to the Initiative are committed to work with partners and governmental bodies to improve infrastructure, go beyond individual packaging design efforts by providing concrete proposals to help enable effective collection, improved sorting and innovative recycling of flexible packaging across Europe.

Together and through various cross-sector and public-private collaborations, the companies are focusing on action in five key areas:

1. **POLICY CHANGES TO INCENTIVISE CIRCULARITY: more ambitious recycling targets, landfill ban, minimum incineration for recyclable packaging**

Participating companies actively call upon the European Commission and national governments to enact policy changes designed to incentivise circularity for packaging materials, including increasingly

¹ Company examples on packaging reduction, reuse & refill: [PepsiCo](#), [Nestlé](#), [Unilever](#), [Mars](#) and [Mondelēz International](#)

² Collective projects on infrastructure investments: [Holy Grail](#), [UK Flexible Packaging Fund](#), [Community of Practice on Flexible Packaging](#),



ambitious and specific recycling targets for all packaging material types, a ban on landfill and reduction of incineration to an absolute minimum, in a harmonised manner across all EU Member States.

2. MAXIMISED COLLECTION: intensify consumer awareness on circularity, mandatory collection of flexible packaging and harmonised packaging disposal instructions

The companies believe mandatory collection of all flexible packaging in Europe would help ensure materials are not discarded in the environment, guarantee sufficient volumes for recycling and avoid incineration. Mandatory collection of all flexible packaging should be considered as soon and as widely as possible, in the upcoming revisions of EU packaging and waste legislations³. Companies participating in the Initiative call upon the European Commission and national governments for a European-wide simplification and harmonization of disposal instructions to consumers to support the collection of flexible packaging, improve sorting and enable consumers to support the transition toward a circular economy for flexible packaging through their individual actions.

3. WASTE MANAGEMENT ACTORS TO CO-PILOT CIRCULARITY FOR FLEXIBLES: better sorting leads to more recycling

For Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) schemes to meet higher recycling targets, it is crucial to actively drive recycling of flexible packaging. EPR-schemes need to stimulate structural improvements on collecting, sorting, recycling and developing end-markets for recycled material, working with partners across the value chain and (local) governments.

EPR-schemes and businesses across the value chain, such as the waste management sector, should increase investments in sorting to allow flexible packaging to be recycled. Through improved sorting, cleaner and more valuable feedstock can be provided to recyclers, which will enable more flexible packaging to be recycled into high value recyclates.

4. INCENTIVES FOR ADVANCED RECYCLING: regulatory and investment predictability needed to scale recycling

To incentivise the highest quality recycled material, up to food grade to reach full circularity, it is crucial to invest in advanced recycling technologies. Innovation offers environmental benefits, avoids downcycling and provides a solid business case for a sustainable future. At the same time, packaging producers and the FMCG-sector should be incentivised to use recycled and renewable materials through a combination of regulatory and voluntary initiatives. As advanced recycling is recognised as one solution to improve full circularity of flexible packaging, the companies advocate for more supportive European regulations that swiftly provide increased legal clarity and investment certainty.

5. OUR COMMITMENT: substantial investments in realisation of fully circular flexible packaging

Participating companies are committed to increase investments; in circular packaging design, in new sorting and recycling technologies and through eco-modulated EPR fees, as multiple approaches are required to ensure more flexible packaging is processed through improved infrastructure. EPR fees paid for flexible packaging need to be specifically used to stimulate increased circularity of flexible

³ Waste Framework Directive (DIRECTIVE 2008/98/EC) and Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive (DIRECTIVE 94/62/EC).



packaging and high-quality output, which in return should lead to more investments for recycling flexibles. Increased transparency on the use of EPR fees and reporting methodologies is part of the Initiative's objectives, to ensure that industry's commitment to the circularity of flexible packaging is not lost to the benefit of other types of packaging.

Participating companies will invest resources to scale up promising complementary technologies that contribute to the transition to a circular economy for flexible packaging. Companies are also committed to support policies designed to improve consumer awareness of collecting, sorting and recycling packaging materials, through on-pack, in-store and online information. Harmonisation of disposal instructions for consumers⁴ is also required to increase the circularity of flexible packaging.

The scale and magnitude of the transition requires action from companies, policy makers, experts, academics and societal organisations. The Initiative wishes to step up the collaboration across the packaging value chain, with EPR-schemes and with EU and local governments, to support the implementation of these changes rapidly.

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⁴ [Joint position - EU harmonised consumer sorting instructions](#)



Silviu Popovici (CEO, PepsiCo Europe): *“We want flexible packaging to follow the circular path of plastic bottles – where we see high recycling rates and we can use up to 100% recycled content. But we need the right conditions in place to get there: widespread collection, high recycling targets, a ban on landfill and minimum incineration. This combined with investments to upgrade sorting and recycling in Europe should bring us to a circular economy and one step closer to a world where packaging never becomes waste”*

Hanneke Faber (President Foods & Refreshment, Unilever) *“An enabling legal framework is crucial to develop the right incentives to encourage innovation and scaling solutions, such as advanced recycling technologies. We are committed to work with various partners to develop new future solutions for a world without waste”*

Vince Gruber (President MEU, Mondelēz International): *“We strongly believe that the key to achieve these bold objectives is an efficient and effective infrastructure for packaging materials across Europe. Ambitious and enforced recycling rates will likely increase circularity and help prevent littering of packaging materials. Therefore, we are committed to support circular economy initiatives enabling recycling of flexibles.”*

Marco Settembri (CEO Zone Europe, Nestlé): *“Our ambition is very clear: we want and need to increase the circularity of our flexible packaging. We are taking immediate action by stepping up investment in improved infrastructure with partners, as we have recently done in [France](#), [Italy](#), [Poland](#), [Spain](#) and [the UK](#). Participants to the Initiative strongly believe in efficient waste management. This needs increased investment by the whole value chain focusing on the effective recycling of flexible packaging”*

Shaid Shah (Global President Food, Multisales and Global Customer, Mars) *“Packaging plays a vital role in delivering high quality products to consumers and protecting food from going to waste. We believe all packaging materials should be part of a circular economy, which is why we are committed to investing in packaging design and stepping up our support for innovative infrastructure. As brands we have a responsibility to play our part, but we can’t realize this objective alone. We call on policy makers, waste managers and consumers to join us in eliminating packaging waste and creating a truly circular packaging economy for Europe.”*

Joachim Quoden (Managing Director Extended Producer Responsibility Alliance, EXPRA): *“EPR schemes are instrumental in increasing the circularity of the value chain of post-consumer packaging. Flexible packaging will need to see their collection, sorting and recycling rates increase in the coming years for recycling targets to be met. National recovery organisations will have to consider options to stimulate structural improvements on collection, sorting and recycling of flexibles. Eco-modulated EPR fees could be considered in that respect.”*

Graham Houlder (Managing Director, CEFLEX): *“Recycling of household collected post-consumer flexible packaging and returning these materials to the economy to replace virgin plastic including in non-food flexible packaging is now a proven concept. Recycling of these packaging to produce food-grade packaging will require additional recycling pathways supported by concrete actions from companies, policy makers, experts, academics and societal organisations”.*



The Flexible Packaging Initiative is an open initiative. For more information, please contact Maria Teresa Scardigli (mtscardigli@kellencompany.com) or any of the contacts mentioned above.