

Remissvar från Svensk Plastindustriförening, SPIF gällande EU-kommissionens förslag till förordning om förpackningar och förpackningsavfall

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Vad är SPIF

SPIF (Svensk Plastindustriförening, organisationsnummer 802004–6440) är ett svenskt branschförbund och har ca 120 medlemsföretag inom plasttillverkning samt tillhörande material och tjänster. Bland medlemsföretagen ingår producenter som omfattas av föreliggande remiss.

Remissvar

SPIF har fått möjlighet att lämna synpunkter på Miljödepartementets förslag gällande EU-kommissionens förordning om förpackningar och förpackningsavfall.

Vi välkomnar initiativet men anser att genomförandet går alltför långsamt. Detta innebär att marknaden kommer att fortsätta att belastas med förpackningar med dålig design som inte kommer att materialåtervinnas i tillräcklig omfattning. Marknaden kan klara av en betydligt kortare omställning med tuffare krav. Nya brytdatum kan vara redan 2026-2027.

Nedan följer våra synpunkter på engelska.

ANNEX I to the Proposal for a Regulation

Table 2: Recyclability performance grades

Recyclability performance grade E corresponds to less than 70% assessment of recyclability per unit, in weight. In order to ease the transition to more recyclable packaging products, we propose minimum 80% for grade E. With a more specified division can targets of > 95 % be possible for certain packaging (e.g. chemical technical household products) within a short period.

Article 6d. Recyclable packing

“it can be recycled so that the resulting secondary raw materials are of sufficient quality to substitute the primary raw materials.”

The meaning of sufficient quality has to be defined as the quality depends of the number of recycling steps and the accompanying aging of the material. It is essential that the resulting secondary raw material can replace virgin material in ordinary products and not

be downcycled ("hidden" in new products were normal virgin raw material otherwise not would be used).

Article 7 Minimum recycled content in plastic packaging

"From 1 January 2040, the plastic part in packaging shall contain the following minimum percentage of recycled content recovered from post-consumer plastic waste, per unit of packaging:

(a) 50 % for contact sensitive plastic packaging, except single use plastic beverage bottles;

(b) 65 % for single use plastic beverage bottles;

(c) 65 % for plastic packaging other than those referred to in points (a) and (b);"

50% for contact sensitive plastic packaging is a very high figure taking into account the increased thermo-mechanical stresses during the recycling process, which may have significant impact on the quality of recyclates as well. It is known that even small amounts of recycled material can induce degradation by contamination. Hence, re-stabilization might be necessary but can result in health issues for sensitive packaging [3] unless the quality of the material is elucidated.

65% for single use plastic bottles can only be justified if sufficient technical data is at hand. Moreover, it presupposes that recycled material for this purpose is available. It must be taken in consideration that the demand for recycled material increases for every year.

The producers/shops must take a larger responsibility to increase the collection and recycling capacities. New incentives (encouraging or coercive) can affect the implementation time.

Article 10 Reusable packaging

Packaging shall be considered reusable where it fulfils the following conditions:

(d) "it is capable of being emptied, unloaded, refilled or reloaded while ensuring compliance with the applicable safety and hygiene requirements; "

It might be difficult for many companies to live up to these requirements as it is impossible to determine what the material has been exposed to by the customers. It presupposes quality control which most probably will not take place. Moreover, we do not have a full understanding of the effect of degradation products from plastic additives and how protection of human health and environment is affected when material is recycled many times.

Article 29 Plastic carrier bags

1. Member States shall take measures to achieve a sustained reduction in the consumption of lightweight plastic carrier bags on their territory.

“A sustained reduction is achieved if the annual consumption does not exceed 40 lightweight plastic carrier bags per person, or the equivalent target in weight, by 31 December 2025, and subsequently by 31 December in each year thereafter.”

It is not enough to give a figure for the amount of reduction for plastic carrier bags. The alternative material must also be mentioned and regulated. This is especially important as the alternatives always give rise to an increased formation of CO₂ [1]. The introduction of a mix of paper and plastics in some packaging, which previously only consisted of plastics, is detrimental for the environment. Such a mixture will not be fitted for mechanical recycling and the change to paper is a consequence of the never-ending attack of plastic material as illustrated in this Regulation.

Article 38 Prevention of packaging waste

1. “Each Member State shall reduce the packaging waste generated per capita, as compared to the packaging waste generated per capita in 2018 as reported to the Commission in accordance with Decision 2005/270/EC, by

(a) 5 % by 2030;

(b) 10 % by 2035;

(c) 15 % by 2040.”

It would be possible to reduce the packaging waste more than the suggested figures. As long as the companies involved know the demands set by the regulation, then a period of five years would be enough for fulfilling the requirements. It is therefore suggested that an evaluation of the outcome should be made earlier than 2030 and new figures for 2035 should be set based on the progress made 2030. The same procedure should be repeated before setting a figure for 2040.

However, there is a risk that the weight will increase as a consequence of a new design which can replace a non-recyclable packaging. Hence, the demand for reduction in weight should only apply for packaging which is not recyclable. This also calls for performing risk analyses.

(26) p. 25

“In relation to the different packaging materials, the lowest input of recycled materials is in plastic packaging. In order to address these concerns in the most appropriate manner, it is necessary to increase the uptake of recycled plastics, by establishing mandatory targets for recycled content in plastic packaging at different levels depending on the contact-sensitivity²⁷ of different plastic packaging applications, and ensuring that the...”

This is history in Sweden. Work is ongoing to collect and sort 200 000 ton/year of plastic packaging already this year. It is evident that there are big differences within EU and it is important that the proposal for regulation will not hinder excellent initiatives for recycling as harmonized packaging rules are on the agenda.

(33) p. 27

“In order to take into account, the risks related to a possible insufficient supply of a specific plastic waste for recycling that might lead to excessive prices or adverse effects on health, safety and the environment, ...”

The priority should be mechanical recycling and not chemical recycling. Bearing that in mind it must be assured that chemical recycling will only be performed when the quality of the recycled material is no longer feasible for mechanical recycling. This presupposes that a system for evaluation of the quality is at hand. The regulation needs to elaborate how to develop a plan.

(37) p.52

‘innovative packaging’

Innovative packaging is dealt with in the proposed regulation and this is a very important issue as new ideas and smart solutions for packaging must not be hindered. However, new concepts might take long time to implement. It is therefore important that new innovations will not be stopped just because of implementation of harmonized regulations.

Article 29 Plastic carrier bags

The discrimination of packaging made of plastic is not justified. Due to their low weight and high functionality, plastic packaging has great potential for material-savings and waste reduction. For instance, if packaging is made of paper products, no reuse quotas are envisaged. This will lead to less CO₂ binding in the forests as short-lived products are favoured on expense on long-lived products.

Summary

In general, SPIF is positive to the proposal for a regulation of the packaging and packaging waste as setting common requirements at EU level will be beneficial for the internal market.

For the sake of clarity and to avoid misunderstandings, it would be much appreciated by us if sentences with 70-80 words could be avoided in the text.

It is important to encourage manufacturers to place on the market more recyclable packaging and to stop discriminating plastic materials, which can be re-used many times as long as rules for quality control is at hand.

For some applications is it possible to use nearly 100% recycled material but when food safety is involved a much lower figure is expected. Hence, it is essential that the amount of recycled material in a specific packaging should be based on what is technical feasible and not on an average value for all plastics used in packaging.

It would be desirable if the regulation could reward good practice and creative incentives offered by the packaging industry. It would facilitate the transition to a circular economy.

Finally, there is a lack of risk analysis in the proposal which can result in severe setbacks as the risks involved with recycled material are not properly dealt with in the regulation.

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References

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- [2]. A.Schweighuber et al, Investigations on the influence of multiple extrusion on the degradation of polyolefins, Polym Deg and Stab, 192 (2021) 109689.
- [3]. M. Hamskog et al, The effect of adding virgin material or extra stabilizer on the recyclability of polypropylene as studied by multi-cell imaging chemiluminescence and microcalorimetry, Polym Deg and Stab 91(2006) p. 429-436.