
PRESS RELEASE

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Unwrapping Sustainable Packaging

Kuala Lumpur, 2 June 2017 – Under constant pressure from governments, the media and consumers alike, the packaging industry is increasingly considering how its products can be made more sustainable. This is in the face of unprecedented environmental impacts on the planet due to waste generation, particularly in the fast-urbanising Asia-Pacific.

Sustainable packaging is a topic that will be addressed at the upcoming 13th Asia Pacific Roundtable for Sustainable Consumption and Production (APRSCP) in October in Melaka.

"There are two factors that impact sustainable packaging: the quality of the material used, and the quantity," said Dr Hari Ramalu, Technical Committee Chairperson of the 13th APRSCP. "Through a Life Cycle Analysis (LCA), companies can reduce the quantity of material used and ensure environmentally-friendly materials are sourced. Both will reduce the ecological impact of the product that is being packaged for the market by the company".

In addition, he said, companies are now designing packaging materials so that at the end of the life of the packaging, it can be recycled or reused.

Sustainable packaging is particularly important in the food industry. Developments in packaging have been a key driver in dramatically reducing the proportion of fresh produce that is wasted in the supply chain. For example, food waste in the supply chain in developing countries is between 30% and 50%, compared to 2% in Europe, where sophisticated packaging solutions are more prevalent.

A case in point is Tetra Pak, which is the world's leading food packaging and processing company, operating in more than 170 countries. According to its Environmental Policy, Tetra Pak products and services "are assessed from an entire life cycle point of view, from product design, material sourcing, operations and manufacturing to transportation, customers and society".

Innovative packaging design is an important component of the multinational's sustainability approach. This will be covered at the 13th APRSCP by Mr Jeffrey Fielkow, Tetra Pak's Vice President for Environment - South Asia, East Asia and Oceania.

It is innovative design that, among other things, is facilitating the ease of recycling Tetra Pak products. For instance, their award-winning Tetra Top® package featuring a separable top portion, enables consumers to detach the plastic from the carton sleeve in one swift movement. The lid can be separated from the carton without affecting the functionality of the package, allowing both parts of the carton to be easily recycled.

That industry giants are leading the move towards sustainable packaging augurs well for the environment, and these companies are being recognised for it. In 2015, Tetra Pak became the first company in the food packaging industry to have its climate impact reduction targets approved by the Science Based Targets. This is a joint initiative by a host of international manufacturers and the UN Global Compact to regulate industrial manufacturing emissions by setting emission reduction targets.

In the same year, another huge consumer brand, McDonald's, announced that its centrally-purchased packaging in Europe was 100% sustainably sourced. Of this, 90% comes from renewable sources. The wood fibre used in the company's paper and board packaging comes from recycled sources or globally-certified sustainably-managed forests. WWF and Greenblue are two environmental NGOs who are collaborating with and recognising McDonald's for their goal to source 100% of their fibre-based packaging worldwide from sustainable sources by 2020.

More recently in September 2016, Coca-Cola HBC – a leading bottler of The Coca-Cola Company – was named sustainability leader of the beverage industry by the Dow Jones Sustainability Indices. The index evaluates the sustainability performance of the largest 2,500 companies listed on the Dow Jones Global Total Stock Market Index and is the key reference point in sustainability investing. One hundred per cent of Coca-Cola HBC bottles are fully recyclable.

Such initiatives and best practices are pushing the move towards sustainable packaging not only on the production side but also to aid consumers close the loop to reduce waste. Transformational changes in the way materials are used and reused are the only way to counter the serious costs of waste production, the largest cost increases of which are in developing countries.

The 13th Asia Pacific Roundtable on Sustainable Consumption and Production (13th APRSCP) is themed 'Enabling Sustainable Consumption and Production Towards Achieving Green Growth'. It is co-hosted by the Asia Pacific Roundtable for Sustainable Consumption and Production and ENSEARCH and will be held on 24-26 October 2017 in Melaka. The 13th APRSCP is endorsed and supported by the Melaka State Government. For registration and more information, please visit the Ensearch website (<http://www.ensearch.org/aprscp/>) or contact Jenny/Nabiha at po@ensearch.org.

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