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European alufoil container recycling on the up

Investment underpins acceptance of benefits



An upward trend is emerging in European recycling rates for alufoil trays and semi-rigid containers which rose to 45 per cent in 2008 (2007: 40 per cent), thanks to an increasing understanding of its benefits in providing more sustainable packaging options.

Aluminium is endlessly recyclable. Recycling of aluminium saves up to 95% of energy use compared with its primary production. This message is being increasingly understood by the packaging supply chain. It is also heartening that consumers are showing an increasing willingness to play their part.

Recycling rates continue to vary considerably by country but the acceptance of the benefits of recycling is being underpinned by the investment being made by local authorities and waste management operators across Europe which, even in difficult economic times, are commissioning the latest sorting and recycling technologies.

Felix Steinbrecher, EAFAs re-elected Container Group chairman, said: “By promoting and sharing best practice, the alufoil industry is helping customers to reduce the environmental footprint of their products. Recently container manufacturers of EAFAs supported recycling initiatives in France and UK in close cooperation with the national aluminium packaging recycling organisations. The objective is to increase the recycling rates and in so doing making Europe a more sustainable community.”



To further underline its commitment to recycling EAFAs joined the Organisation of European Aluminium Refiners and Remelters (OEA). Membership of OEA will also provide better access to recycling intelligence and encourage consumers to understand the benefits of recycling.

Linking the improvements in recycling rates to continuous light weighting through down-gauging material, the industry is helping to produce more sustainable options for our customers. Neither should it be forgotten that innovation across the market for alufoil trays and semi-rigid containers is also creating technically adept consumer convenient features.

Felix Steinbrecher added, “Importantly the latest recycling figures, plus the strides made in producing lighter materials, are compatible with the proposed European Commission’s 2020 ‘Raw Materials Initiative’ in which resource saving has been identified as one of the key priorities.”

- The above recycling rate is an average European rate based on national consumption and recycling data compiled by EAF A from European countries where consumption volumes and recycling rates vary considerably.
- Alufoil trays and semi-rigid containers are used in markets such as ready prepared meals, bakery products, pet foods and takeaway foods.

The European Aluminium Foil Association is the international body representing companies engaged in the rolling and rewinding of alufoil and in the manufacture of alufoil containers and of all kind of flexible packaging. Its more than 100 members include companies in Western, Central and Eastern Europe.

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