

Working towards a waste-free future

When setting out the Coca-Cola Company's sustainability strategy back in 2018, chief executive James Quincey was confident that the approach was right for both the planet and his company's own bottom line. "By investing in our planet and our packaging, we can help make the world's packaging problem a thing of the past," said the US-based British businessman at the time.

Named World Without Waste (WWW), the strategy is three-fold – as Coca-Cola packaging innovation manager Francisco Nogueira explained at a packaging conference in Brussels, Belgium, held earlier this year.

"In short, we design first with the objectives of removing-reducing-reusing, and then we have the goal of sell-one, collect-one. Finally, we engage partners," he told delegates at the 'Shaping the Future with Packaging' conference, which was co-hosted by Flexographic Technical Association Europe and Intergraf.

While Coca-Cola's target to make 100 per cent of its packaging recyclable globally by 2025 has been well-documented for some time now, perhaps under the radar is the company's plan to eliminate 3 million tonnes of virgin plastics from non-renewable sources (from a 2020 baseline). In fact, by 2030, it intends to make 50 per cent of its packaging from recycled material, while 25 per cent of its volume will be offered in reusable formats.

So, how far has it come in its journey towards achieving this?

"In concrete terms for the design of packaging, there are four main working areas, in what is called 'the bottle of the future,'" stated Nogueira. "The two main objectives are to reduce the use of plastics by substitution and light-weighting and increase refillables. One working area is to enhance PET recyclability by changing coloured bottles to clear PET with the focus on Sprite and Fuze tea.

"Secondly, and very much talked about, is the increased use of recycled and plant-based materials. Our aim is to reach 100 per cent recycled and renewable PET."

The removal of packaging is another area Coca-Cola has claimed to put a great deal of effort into. Examples include soda syrups for carbonated water, new dispensing solutions, and refillables.

"Then, as we try to foster innovation, we are trialling prototypes, such as our AdeZ

In a recent packaging conference in Brussels, Coca-Cola provided an update on its vision for a World Without Waste. **Dominique Huret** reports from Belgium



*Above: Reusable formats are destined to grow in the foodservice sector
Right: Coca-Cola admits that the production of ocean plastics is really difficult to scale up*

almond plant-based drink in the Paboco paper bottle," Nogueira explained. "But, for various and complex reasons, the production of plant, ocean plastics and paper bottles is really difficult to scale up. They will remain for very specific markets. We then need to focus on a wide variety of solutions."

The 'collect' part of the WWW strategy has ambitious targets, according to Nogueira. By 2030, 100 per cent of the PET bottles and cans produced by Coca-Cola are to be collected and recycled, thanks to a collection system in each of the company's markets. No figures were shared at the conference on this specific point.

For the 'partner' element of the strategy, one of the key projects is the implementation of deposit return systems (DRSs). Nogueira pointed to 13 DRSs in operation today across Scandinavia and the rest of Europe.

Finland was the first in 1971 and Malta, Latvia and Slovakia became the most recent last year. Legislated for, but not implemented yet, are nine other regions and countries with plans for DRSs, with Scotland the only country launching this year. Six are set for





Above: Francisco Nogueira says French legislation concerning single-use packaging is forcing innovation
Right: Coke bottles in Italy interact with the consumer



2024 and an additional three for 2025/26, including one for the rest of the UK. Another nine are in discussion – including in France and Belgium – with primary legislation published but implementation forecast for 2025/26.

Sipa, Erema, Ioniqa, and CuRe Technology are among Coca-Cola’s partners when it

comes to innovation, while its partners in marine litter and recycling include the likes of the Ocean Cleanup, River Cleanup, and Mares.

“When we talk about partnering, we realise our responsibility and want to use our brand to reach all our consumers and raise their awareness of the WWW message,”

said Nogueira. “We want to have all our brands with that message on each and every can and bottle.”

Nogueira pointed to several good examples of sustainable progress, including label-less Swiss Valser water bottles and the marine plastics Coca-Cola bottle, but more drastic changes come in the reuse segment, he suggested.







“For many good reasons, we decided years ago to limit our glass bottles to move to lighter alternatives,” he added. “Here we are again, back to glass for reuse needs, in some limited geographies, of course. With this, crates will be back where they have disappeared and will comprise glass but also reusable PET.”

French legislation forbidding single-use packaging in fast food establishments and public buildings is pushing innovation, Nogueira added. “In Germany, McDonald’s and Burger King are developing reusable packaging deposit systems with the help of supply chain companies. Our R&D team must invent revolutionary equipment to serve consumers on and off premises.

“Fast food is one segment, but there will be hotels, public buildings, homes, and transport areas, while issues such as hygiene, carbonation, and transportation still need work. We are at the dawn of a revolution in our consumption patterns, in order to build a planet without a waste problem.” **EP**

Agr Plastic Bottle Testing Solutions

Laboratory-Based Quality Assurance

-  Dimensional Gauging
-  Fill Height/Volume
-  Material Distribution
-  Burst/Volume Expansion
-  Topload
-  Thickness Measurement



Our Brand Protects Your Brand.
 agrintl.com
 +1.724.482.2163

