

STREET TALK: INTELLIGENCE FOR THE INFORMED PACKAGING EXECUTIVE

PWP Sees The Future and Invests In Recycling

In June, PWP Industries is launching what it claims to be the first U.S. post-consumer recycling plant for thermoformed containers, a move that could spike the use of recycled PET (RPET) in new packaging.

PWP is making the investment to be ahead of the curve for recycled material in thermoformed packages, said PWP chairman Leon Farahnik. Currently, RPET prices are higher than virgin PET, but that does not matter in the long term, he said. "We foresee the future, and we're a firm believer that recycling will have to be part of the program," Farahnik noted.

The facility, located in Mineral Wells, WV, will start small, producing about 40mn pounds annually of RPET resin but is easily scalable, and will sent the resin through a complete washing and cleaning system that can also sterilize the material for food-grade use.



PWP already has released packages from agricultural scrap under the Earth's Pack brand.

What could help the plant succeed is a constant supply of material. That will be made easier through an agreement with **Coca-Cola Recycling**, Farahnik said. Coca-Cola has opened a bottle-to-bottle PET recycling plant in Spartanburg, SC, in the same regional proximity as the PWP plant.

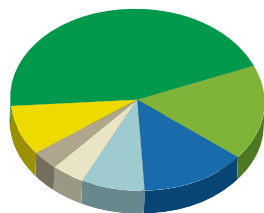
PWP already offers 10 percent recycled content for salad bowls used by **Subway** (with material from post-industrial scrap) and plans to hike the percentage on many products. The Vernon, CA-based company is a major thermoformer for bakeries, confectionary, and a variety of other food products. **PS**

Recycling Makes A Difference in Emissions
And So Does Packaging in Soft Drinks

With help from government-funded **Climate Trust** in England, **Coca-Cola** recently completed a lifecycle assessment of its *Diet Coke* packaging that might have proved only one thing: recycling makes a difference in carbon emissions.

Material Science

Coca-Cola in Great Britain uses 361,000 tons of raw materials for its soft drinks annually in both product and package, including:



- 45.1% - Sugar & Sweeteners
- 16.9% - Glass
- 13.7% - PET
- 8.1% - Aluminum
- 4.1% - Concentrate & Fruit Juice
- 3.4% - Carbon Dioxide
- 8.7% - Other

Source: Coca-Cola Co.

The study was ballyhooed in England as showing a can of Coca-Cola generating about half the greenhouse-gas emissions of a glass bottle. However, that difference was largely credited to the extra 10 percent recycled content in the aluminum can vs. the glass container. Boosting recycled content can reduce carbon emissions by as much as 60 percent, according to the report.

But perhaps another important result from the study, beyond trying to proclaim the questionable advantages of a can over glass, was the overall impact of packaging. From 30 to 70 percent of a soft drink's carbon footprint comes from its package, a huge percentage noted by the study. Glass accounted for the highest percentage, with 68.5 percent of the glass bottle coming from the package. **PS**

Recycled PLA Gains Food Foothold with ConAgra

In another step toward sustainability, **ConAgra Foods** has become the first company to use recycled polylactic acid (PLA) for its shrink films.

The Omaha, NE-based food supplier will replace more than 400,000 pounds of resin with the PLA material, primarily in film using PVC or glycol-based PET (PETG). The PLA film will be used for tamper-evident seals on table spreads and for printed shrink labels for whipped toppings and cooking spray.

However, in the bigger picture, the use by a major brand owner of recycled PLA represents a breakthrough, one alluded to by PLA resin supplier **NatureWorks**, Minnetonka, MN, in recent forecast announcements. ConAgra will use more than 50 percent recycled PLA from industrial scrap in its seals and labels. Converter **Bluepack**, Amherst, NY, will provide the shrink film to ConAgra.



ConAgra Foods claims new recycled PLA material for its shrink films will reduce carbon emissions by about 592,000 pounds annually.

The move to a recycled biopolymer could spur continued growth at NatureWorks and for PLA. The company said March 12 it was assessing a second production facility in Europe, Asia Pacific, or the Americas and would make a decision based on demand and availability of the corn-based material. Its flagship Blair, NE, plant will reach its capacity of 300mn pounds by mid-year. **PS**