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## **World largest PET LCA rehabilitates one-way bottles One-way PET levels with refillable glass**

Single-use PET beverage bottles face refillable glass on equal terms. This is the unexpected but clear result of the largest, uncompromising, scientific study on PET conducted by the renowned IFEU institute in Heidelberg, Germany. The study was commissioned by Petcore, the European trade association representing the interests of the PET beverage sector, with support from a range of German beverage industries.

The study, which was completed in August 2004, used new 2002-03 production data and for the first time includes all recycling outlets relevant to PET, from production to final recycling into various new products. The IFEU study meets all German and international LCA (Life Cycle Assessment) standards, and has been peer-reviewed under the chairmanship of Prof. Dr. Walter Klöpffer, an established German and internationally recognised LCA expert. According to his judgement, the study is „innovative, thorough, according to LCA standards, and as detailed as ever“. He also stated that „refillable glass was treated very fairly“ and „no attempts to smooth out PET data were observed“.

### **Comparison reflects on German market playing field**

The study, commissioned in May 2003, reflects on prerequisites imposed on the German packaging market by UBA, the national environment agency. Refillable glass was depicted as the benchmark for „ecologically favourable“ and any packaging not able to meet this standard, would fall victim to a mandatory deposit regime. IFEU experts compared all one-way PET bottles with market relevance, with refillable glass. In Germany, one-way PET is dominated by the 1.5-litre bottle, competing with the dominance of the 0.7-litre refillable glass bottle. Each of the eight environmental parameters such as greenhouse gases, use of natural resources, acidification, and the use of natural space (priorities set by UBA) were calculated back to 1,000-litre units.

### **One-way PET as „ecologically favourable“ as refillable glass**

The LCA shows clearly that without deposit, one-way PET is as „ecologically favourable“ as refillable glass.

- Under source-separated collection conditions such as DSD, the environmental effects of one-way PET are similar to those of refillable glass.
- Under deposits, the environmental performance of one-way PET deteriorates. This is mainly caused by the fact that most German one-way PET deposit bottles are shipped to the Far East for recycling. This difference would disappear if deposit bottles were to be recycled in Europe, as is the case with DSD bottles.

### **Equal conditions for ecologically equal packaging systems**

The IFEU study revokes the relevance of the discriminatory classification of one-way PET. „Ecologically equivalent packaging sectors should no longer be disadvantaged compared to refill systems“, says Frank Koelewijn, Director General of Petcore. PET should return to DSD kerbside collection, as is the case with other „favourable“ packaging systems. According to Koelewijn „One-way PET is now proven to be „ecologically favourable“, thus should be

exempted from a deposit, or, at least, be categorised within the same fee structure as the one applying to refillable packaging“.

Petcore does not, as a matter of principle, take position for or against any particular collection system, be it bring, kerbside, or deposit. Each system has its own unique place determined by culture and infrastructure, which should be respected, provided it is economically, ecologically, and socially sound.

*Petcore (PET containers recycling Europe) is a non-profit European trade association based in Brussels. Its mission focuses on the development of PET packaging, with a particular emphasis on PET recycling.*

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