

Petcore's Director General address

Bring Systems: the need for high-tech, low-cost consumer appeal

Dear Reader,

A few days ago I returned from a visit to the headquarters of Tomra near Oslo where I met with senior staff and was shown the inner sanctum of the company's R&D activities. What I learnt was that, rightly or wrongly, most stakeholders who are in the business of post-consumer packaging collection, sorting and recycling, have a false impression of what this company is presently all about.

Most of you – and that included me until last week – know Tomra as the provider of return vending machines that are used in countries where beverage bottles and cans carry a deposit. Therefore they inevitably lobby for the introduction of deposits, full stop.

If that was true in the past, it is certainly no longer the case. Realising that in the vast majority of European countries deposits are not an option, they turned their attention to the magic words: "consumer participation". They hit the right button.

In September 2003 I visited Entsorga in Cologne where I spent most of my time reviewing the latest "innovations" in the field of post consumer collection

containers for packaging materials. It was simply appalling. With the exception of two or three, all I saw was WASTE containers. Big, sturdy and ugly; they had the looks of heavy-duty industrial use as if you'd just entered the backside of a junkyard.

Looking at a number of bring-systems in Europe, one can understand why so many of them achieve low return rates. Would you want to bring your used bottles back to a place that looks plain ugly, that is often dirty and smelly? Probably not.



They are designed for two things only: durability and ease of use by the waste management company that comes to empty them. Consumer friendliness played no central role during the design stage.

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Luckily there are also places with much more appeal to the consumer, but it must be said that innovative and consumer friendly bring systems are still few and far between. Where national collection agencies have a say in the design of bring systems, it mostly results in systems that do pay attention to the needs of the consumer. In many instances however, the ones that call the shots are town administrators or waste management companies. They don't necessarily understand the importance of consumer appeal, and lack the foresight that well designed bring systems are often more cost-effective.

Aside from the need of good consumer participation, bring systems must also pay attention to the costs of transport, logistics, and revenue from sorted recyclates. This is an area where a lot of cost-savings can be achieved. This, together with the need for achieving a good collection rate, is why a number of collection agencies have chosen to work with kerbside (door-to-door) collection schemes.

Tomra has thrown all its expertise in this basket of daunting opportunities: can we design bring systems with excellent consumer appeal, that beats competition on overall costs, that sorts beverage containers for the consumer while retaining high revenue from the recyclates?

I have seen the latest "Recycling Center" in their R&D facilities, ready to be field-tested in Europe, and I'm impressed. Time will tell whether indeed they have developed a new generation solution that cuts costs and improves recycling rates. I am sure we will hear more about this in the months ahead.

Frank Koelewijn,
Director General

The German return obligation on one-way packaging

The controversial return obligation on all one-way beverage packaging introduced by the German Ministry of Environment at the beginning of the year has seen yet some new developments.

In the lack of a nation-wide return system, the notorious regulation led to some so-called "island solutions". Several retailers have had packaging specifically designed for them to limit their financial obligations, by only taking back and refunding the packaging of those products they have themselves sold. Other retailers have delisted specific packaging entailing cumbersome logistics for their take-back. Many interests groups have referred the decision to the various German Länder and various beverages importers referred Germany to the European Commission.

On April 20, 2004, the European Commission officially asked Germany to change its deposit and return systems as it considers that the obligation set into place is in violation of both the Treaty's Internal Market rules (Article 28) and of Directive 94/62/EC on Packaging and Packaging Waste (Article 7). The Commission thus formally considered that the obligation constitutes a barrier to the free movement of packaged beverages from other Member States. More specifically, the Commission deems that the German measure affects imported drinks because, for reasons mainly related to long distance deliveries, some 95 per cent of imported beverages are packaged in 'one way' containers.

Frits Bolkestein, the European Commissioner for Internal Market, declared that Germany has not made enough efforts in developing a solution that would work according to EU rules. Indeed, the Commission considers that the additional

elements provided by the German authorities (following the letter of formal notice sent by the Commission in October 2003) provide no substantial evidence that the return obligation does not infringe on EU law.

The Commission's request will now take the form of a reasoned opinion, the second step of an infringement procedure. In case Germany fails to respond satisfactorily within a two months period, the Commission could decide to take the case to the European Court of Justice.

The European Court of Justice, has in its turn, rendered its conclusions on case C-463/01 initiated in December 1995 by the Commission, France and the UK against the German Federal Republic.

The case revolved around one main issue: the German packaging ordinance imposing a punitive deposit on one way packaging if the share of beer and mineral water packaged in refillable containers falls below 72%.

The Commission filed a complaint against Germany because the packaging ordinance thus encroaches upon the free movement of goods. Indeed, directive 80/777/CEE on the approximation of the laws of the Member States relating to the exploitation and marketing of natural mineral waters, requires that mineral waters be packaged at the spring in the very packaging that will be ultimately sold to the consumer. Given that, the Commission considered that the German packaging ordinance by fostering the use of refillable containers de facto hinders imports from foreign mineral water fillers.

In its conclusions rendered on May 6, 2004, the European Court of Justice agreed with the Commission: Germany is in violation of article 5 of directive 94/62 on packaging and packaging waste, article 28 of the Treaty and article 3 of directive 80/777/CEE the approximation of the laws of the Member States relating to the exploitation and marketing of natural mineral waters.

Petcore welcomes new members aboard

The "new Petcore" seems like a thing of the past nowadays as it is now almost three years ago that the Director General, the team, the aims and the graphical identity of Petcore were transformed. But "evolution not revolution" was the catch phrase then, when the changes were envisaged and then set into place. Changes cannot occur overnight though, as it is a dynamic process that takes both time and effort, and in this respect Petcore is still in an "evolutionary" phase.

The most important change for Petcore was definitely the move echoed in its mission statement; while the "old Petcore" fully focussed on PET recycling, the "new Petcore" shifted towards achieving sustainable growth for PET. To reach this goal, Petcore definitely needed to develop its base membership as PET growth can only be protected if all stakeholders in the PET business chain can share their views while discussing new developments.

This is why the companies that originally founded Petcore (resin producers and preform and bottle manufacturers) were joined by beverage producers back in 1999. But that was not enough: the PET business encompasses much more than just containers end users.

In order to put into practice its new mission statement, these last couple of years Petcore decided to systematically approach several companies having PET close at heart. This means resin manufacturers, bottle manufacturers, bottle fillers, reclaimers, feedstock suppliers, machine makers and national collection agencies.

Petcore then takes this perfect opportunity to welcome all new members aboard. A warm

welcome to: PET packaging producer Constar, fibres manufacturer Tergal Fibres, machine manufacturer Piovan, additives manufacturer Johnson Matthey, filler Spadel and recyclers Cleanaway, Montello, Rethmann Plano, RPB, and

Sorepla; and let us make the PET business move forward.

If you too would like to become part of the Petcore family just send us an e-mail at info@petcore.org.

Packaging recovery the Spanish way

Ecoembalajes, also known as Ecoembes, is the body set up by Spanish businesses to manage the collection and recycling of packaging waste, as set out in the 11/97 law on packaging and packaging waste implementing EU directive 94/62/EC.

Ecoembes was founded by companies involved in the packaging chain, such as packaging and packaging material manufacturers, fillers and distributors of packaged goods, in order to endorse their "producer responsibility" liability. Ecoembes has 4 member categories: packer-fillers, retailers/distributors, raw materials manufacturers and recyclers.

All in all, 55 companies make up Ecoembes. Out of these 55 companies, 55% are packer-fillers, 20% are retailers/distributors, another 20% are raw materials manufacturers and the final 5% is represented by recyclers.

Ecoembes licensees need to draw up an annual declaration of all packaging placed on the market and pay a fee that varies according to the type of packaging material and on its weight.

Unlike many other green dot systems, Spanish Ecoembalajes requires the mandatory marking of all licensed packaging. All packaging licensed with Ecoembes must therefore visibly bear the distinctive "green dot" symbol.

Ecoembalajes is not responsible for organising selective collection, but rather funds local authorities to do so. By proceeding this way, Ecoembes makes sure that the system set into place is the most cost-effective one. Indeed Ecoembes argues that it is municipalities who best know which type of collection system is suitable for their specific situation. Ecoembes is primarily responsible for household packaging.



The Spanish population received separate collection quite well. Indeed, the 2002 annual survey conducted by Ecoembes reveals that about 70% of Spaniards sort at least one type of recyclables.

In 2002, a total of 935.000 tonnes of paper/ cardboard and lightweight packaging waste was recovered.



Material recovery and recycling events

Forthcoming events

May

17-20/05 Waste Expo.
Dallas, USA

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25-28/05 PLASTPOL.
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June

08-09/06 5th New Europe, Russia & CIS PET
Markets.
Vilnius, Lithuania

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