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Dear Reader,

The recently published Ifeu Life Cycle Assessment on one-way PET and refillable glass on the German market (see Petcore summary at http://www.petcore.org/publ_01.html) is so wide in its scope that some important issues could snow under given the significance of the key findings. The ecological cost of transporting products from A to B is one of those aspects deserving more attention.

For example, we have seen that longer transport distances translate into a higher ecological burden for the whole life cycle of the product. This principle applies to any product, not just beverage bottles. The fact that shipment of post-consumer PET to ports in countries as far as China results in a deterioration of the whole ecological profile of PET, is also a logical consequence.

Obviously, the observation that the ecological burden per transported kilometer for glass is significantly higher than that for PET reflects the differences in weight per transported liter. Does this mean that a Spätburgunder from Baden can no longer be sold in Milan

or that a good bottle of Chianti from Tuscany should not be served in a Berlin restaurant? I certainly hope not.

This brings us to the heart of the matter. The two types of products mentioned earlier: pre-consumption and post-consumption beverage bottles, are examples of very fundamental issues relevant to any product (and most types of recovered waste), deserving wider public and political attention. It is a question of how to balance free trade requirements prescribed in the European Treaty, with the increasingly important quest for true sustainability.

The main ecological impact of transporting products over a certain distance centers on the consumption of energy. The key question is, how much are Europeans willing to pay for a glass of Chianti in terms of energy taxes, compared with the pleasure of tasting the velvety wonder from Tuscany. This continues to be the focus of an intense political debate where unfortunately, the leaders of our member states have yet to come to a conclusive agreement.

Before we enter into more detail on this interesting subject, let's make clear that we are now no longer talking about the impact of transporting beverages from A to B, but about the way Europe should address the larger picture. After all, as our LCA indicates, the whole energy

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impact of one-way PET, including feedstock, production, transport and recovery, is so small in comparison with refillable glass, that it equals to the average German driving 40 km per year in his VW Golf! That puts things into perspective.

Now, back to our topic. It is obvious that Germany cannot impose an energy tax on imported Chianti without Italy imposing an energy tax on the Spätburgunder. That is a consequence of having a European playing field.

Perhaps less obvious, but equally logic, is the expectation of EU citizens that the Union needs to implement sustainability measures in a sustainable way, meaning that not only ecological aspects, but also economical and societal needs are taken into account. Such approach does not make it easier to reach consensus on a reform of energy taxes, but it is the only way forward.



I dare to say that in Europe, most national attempts to unilaterally impose additional duties on international goods or services are aimed at protecting local markets. They often come under the disguise of "protecting the environment". You should expect the European Commission and the Court of Justice to clamp down on such national initiatives much faster and more decisively, than in the past.

The same free market principles do not necessarily apply to the marketing and sale of recovered post-consumption products, often wrongly referred to as "recovered waste". In reality these products are valuable raw materials, recovered from municipal waste. We know that it costs money to recover post-consumer products, but it is a price we are willing to pay to help protecting the environment. To be more precise: protection of the environment is the only reason why we are willing to pay that price.

This means that collection and sorting of post-consumer products is subsidised, paid for by those that place the products on the market. It leads to the logical conclusion that free market principles only apply to subsidised recovered products as long as the prime objective, namely protection

of the environment, is not being jeopardised. This is a point well recognised by national collection agencies, the European Parliament and the European Court of Justice, but the European Commission has, this far, failed to provide the tools needed to transform expectations into enforceable practices.

For PET, we have covered the distance to target set by the German Environment Ministry. PET beverage containers, be it one-way, two-way or refill, meet, or exceed, the German refillable glass benchmark and we have a full-size LCA to prove that. In terms of a level playing field and truly sustainable policies though, there is still much work to do to cover the distance from where we are today to the target of where we need to be tomorrow.

Frank Koelewijn



Convergence of Packaging Systems

Those who read our summary of the LCA, or perhaps even the whole study, must have noticed that for some of the input data, statistical process variations were included. Modern LCA experts believe that any serious LCA should include statistical variance.

In plain English this means that when the ecological profiles of two products are compared based on their average impact on the environment, there will always be a difference. The final result will inevitably lead to two simple dots on a graph, with a space in between. Even if a magnifying glass is needed to observe the space between the dots, one can always argue: "I see space between the dots, therefore the one product is better than the other". Such biased interpretations have often led to irritation and even to abuse. This is exactly what happened when the German Environment Ministry decided to split the range of packaging systems on the market in two: those that are "good", and those that are "bad" for the environment.

The fact that our LCA resulted in all PET containers ending up in the "good" basket does not mean that we agree on splitting up the market between black and white sheep. To the contrary, we believe it acts as a smoke screen to hide the real issues. Building an LCA with the inclusion of process variations will reveal that the ecological differences between various packaging systems are insignificant. Let's illustrate this with a sporting example.

Johnny and James are experienced sprinters on the 100-meter track. They decided to run against each other during a three-day competition. Here are the results:

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Average
Johnny	10.04 sec.	10.13 sec.	10.05 sec.	10.073 sec.
James	10.09 sec.	10.04 sec.	10.06 sec.	10.063 sec.

The simple LCA looks at the average and concludes that James is better, because his average is best. Johnny thinks he wins because he won two out of three races. The realistic LCA looks at the whole picture and comes to the conclusion that Johnny and James are both good sprinters.

Mr. Gilgen, a weathered LCA expert who peer-reviewed our study, calls this the convergence of packaging systems. He is one amongst a growing number of scientists who believe that there is a direct correlation between the economical costs of a packaging system and its ecological profile. The mere fact that packaging systems compete on the same market means that their ecological profiles are more or less comparable. The inclusion of statistical process variation in an LCA only serves to strengthen that belief.

The French recovery organisation

In our tour of the European national collection agencies, we will today, review the French Eco-Emballages systems.



Eco-Emballages started out in 1992, based on the Lalonde decree N. 92-377, which required that companies that put packaging into the French market, importers, fillers or packaging producers, be responsible of the take-back, recovery and recycling of their packaging waste.

The recovery organisation closely cooperates with local authorities throughout the country. As it is local authorities that know best how selective collection needs to be organised in their area, they are the ones responsible for the actual setting into place of the collection system. Eco-Emballages provides those local authorities with both financial and technical assistance.

Similarly to many of its "Green Dot" European sister organisations, Eco-Emballages is divided up into various sub-companies, each devoted to the recovery of a specific packaging material.

The company that distinctively devoted to the recovery and recycling of plastics packaging in France is called Valorplast.

The Valorplast logo is written in a stylized, cursive green font. The word "Valorplast" is underlined with a thin blue line.

It is hence through Valorplast that Eco-Emballages funds local authorities for the specific collection, sorting, transport and recovery of plastics packaging.

Eco-Emballages/ Valorplast's financing is almost fully sustained by industry. Packaging companies, beverage producers, distributors and importers of household products fund the system by paying a fee on every packaging item they put on the French market. By doing so, they have the right, and the obligation, to put the Green Dot marking on their packaging, publicly stating that they have fulfilled their waste take-back obligation. The rest of the organisation's funding comes from taxes.

At the end of 2003, the total number of Eco-Emballages licenses was of 10,021, representing 22,000 different companies. These 10,021 licences allowed, amongst other, the collection of 171,900 Tonnes of plastics packaging (September 2004). Of these 171,900 Tonnes, PET packaging represented 75% of total plastic collection (128,100 Tonnes). An excellent recovery rate indeed!

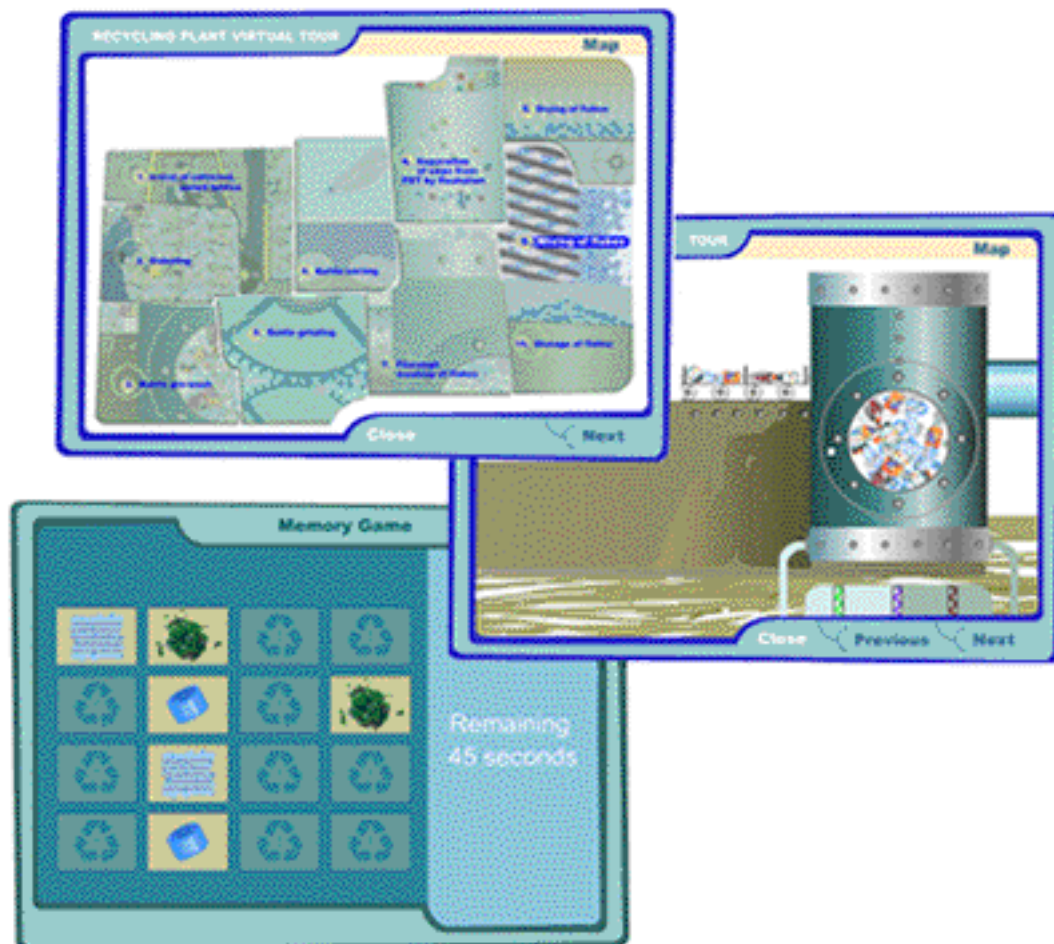
This outstanding result is due to the efforts Eco-Emballages made to develop collaboration with a majority of local authorities. In December 2003, 53 millions of the total 60 million French population were able to separately collect their packaging waste. And separate collection has become a way of life in France as 80% of the population reports that they do make sure that their packaging gets recovered by setting them apart from their ordinary waste.



There is no better way to learn than playing

Education. At Petcore, we have always felt this were the key-word in the success of collection and recycling programme for PET. This is why, earlier this year, we decided to develop a web page aimed at kids exclusively. In our eyes, it was important that kids have fun while learning, so, to go with our kids page, we developed a game and a quiz revolving around PET manufacture, collection and recycling.

Following this train of thought, we have now developed yet another two games: a memory game and a tetris-like game, both based, of course, on PET and PET recycling. But that is not all. We have also developed a " virtual tour " of a PET recycling plant, so that children can better learn what are the various steps involved in PET recovery.



All three new games are now available on our website at: http://www.petcore.org/kids_intro_01.html. Because there is no better way to learn than playing.

Material recovery and recycling events

Forthcoming events

October

20-27/10 K2004 - International Trade Fair.
Düsseldorf, Germany

For further information:
Tel. (+49)-211-456-001,
Fax (+49)-211-456-0668,
e-mail: k-online@messe-duesseldorf.de.

November

03-06/11 Ecomondo.
Rimini, Italy

For further information:
Tel. (+39)-0541-744-111,
Fax (+39)-0541-744-200.
e-mail: riminifierai@rimini-fiera.it.

9-12/11 Prama 2004.
Bilbao, Spain

For further information:
Tel. (+34)-94-4285-400,
Fax (+34)-94-4424-222.
e-mail: prama@feriadebilbao.com.

10-11/11 Irish Recycling and Waste
Management.
Dublin, Ireland

For further information:
Tel. (+44)-20-865-17100,
Fax (+44)-20-865-17117.
e-mail: irwm04@fav-house.com.

10-12/11 Pollutec East & Central Europe.
Vienna, Austria

For further information:
Tel. (+43)-1-727-20-0,
Fax (+43)-1-727-20-443.
e-mail: info@messe.at.

10-12/11 Poleko - International Ecological Fair.
Poznan, Poland

For further information:
Tel. (+48)-61-869-2592,
Fax (+48)-61-866-5827.
e-mail: poleko@mtp.com.pl.

30/11-03/12 Pollutec - International Exhibition
of Environmental Equipment, Technology and
Services.
Lyon, France

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