

FIVE REASONS TO RECYCLE BEVERAGE CARTONS

1 THEY ARE 100% RECYCLABLE

Each part of the beverage carton can be recycled into new products or used for energy recovery. The high quality wood fibres are flexible and strong, providing a valuable raw material for new paper-based products, extending the life of the wood fibre and locking-in the carbon for longer. The residual polymer and aluminium foil can also be used in a number of different applications, including new consumer and industrial products, or as a composite material for roof tiles and construction panels.

2 THEY HAVE A MARKET VALUE AND CAN BE REPROCESSED IN THE UK

ACE UK is building the UK's only beverage carton reprocessing facility, creating a domestic market for used beverage cartons from 2013 and enabling local authorities with no-export policies on waste to recycle cartons in the UK. It also provides an opportunity for local authorities who currently export cartons to reduce transportation and have confidence in a defined UK recycling route.

3 DIVERTS MATERIAL FROM LANDFILL

Recycling beverage cartons diverts waste from landfill, avoiding landfill tax and gate fees, offering better value for residents. By extending the life of the raw material resources in cartons and keeping the carbon locked-in for longer, it also means that the greenhouse gas emissions associated with landfill are avoided, reinforcing sustainability commitments.

4 INCREASES OVERALL PARTICIPATION IN RECYCLING BY RESIDENTS

Research has shown that switching from bring banks to kerbside collections increases recycling participation and tonnage by up to six times. Plus, by including beverage cartons as part of existing kerbside recycling collections, local authorities can expect an overall improvement in participation from residents, who find it easier to distinguish what can be included.

5 THEY ARE A GROWING PART OF THE WEEKLY SHOP

The use of beverage cartons by retailers and manufacturers is growing, due to the wide range of functional and environmental benefits they provide. Each year, 57,000 tonnes of beverage cartons are used for an increasingly wide range of food products for the UK market, from juice and milk to chopped tomatoes and soup. This equates to around 2.3 kg of cartons per household¹ which could be recycled instead of going to landfill.



Beverage cartons are often called Tetra Paks, in the same way vacuum cleaners are often called hoovers, but they are actually manufactured by a number of companies including Elopak and SIG Combibloc, as well as Tetra Pak. All three companies are ACE UK members.

¹ We estimate that 54 cartons per person per annum are used in the UK, representing over 200 cartons a year for a typical family of four.

BEVERAGE CARTONS: BEHIND THE MYTHS...



Aren't cartons waxed, making them difficult to recycle?

Cartons contain no wax – they are made from a mix of paperboard, polyethylene and, for ambient cartons only (long-life cartons that don't have to be chilled), aluminium. They are already successfully recycled in large volumes throughout Europe, where the high quality wood fibres provide a valuable raw material for new paper-based products, and the polymer and aluminium are recycled into new products or recovered to generate energy.

But isn't the recycling process complex and problematic?

While there are a number of steps, the carton recycling process is essentially quite simple: cartons are dropped into a pulper – similar to a giant domestic food mixer – filled with water and pulped for around 20 minutes. This delaminates the packaging, breaking down the component parts, ready to be separated and made into new products.

The high-quality wood fibres in cartons are long and strong, and can be recycled up to six times. As fibre cannot be recycled in a closed-loop system - virgin fibre has to be introduced at some point in the process - carton fibres make up a valuable and sought after part of the fibre recycling system, especially when they are collected as a single material stream.

Aren't composites ultimately bad for the environment?

Beverage cartons have a strong environmental story to tell. They are made mainly from wood fibre, a natural, renewable material sourced from responsibly-managed forests. They are also a low carbon packaging choice and are easy to recycle.

When assessing the environmental impact of packaging it is important to look at the whole product lifecycle. Life Cycle Assessments undertaken by leading environmental research institutions show that the carton has the lowest carbon footprint for its core category of milk and juice.

Isn't packaging made from recycled content better than packaging made from virgin raw materials?

Assessing the environmental performance of different packaging types is not that simple. It is important to take a life cycle approach to measuring and managing impacts across all stages of the value chain, from cradle to grave.

Cartons are made primarily from wood fibre – a renewable material sourced from responsibly-managed forests – are widely recycled and are highly transport-efficient, which means they are repeatedly shown to be a low carbon packaging choice in life cycle assessments across the world.

Encouraging residents to 'wash and squash' their beverage cartons creates more space in the recycling bin and better transport efficiency.



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