

January 2017

Flexible packaging adds significant value in a circular economy

Following the completion of the FIACE project, which highlighted the significant contribution flexible packaging makes to a circular economy and identified opportunities to optimize end of life solutions, it has been announced that the project will continue with a wider scope under the new name of CEFLEX (a Circular Economy for Flexible Packaging).

Flexible packaging supports efficient use of resources and waste minimization throughout the lifecycle of the packed product. Not only does flexible packaging help to prevent food waste by offering optimised fit-for-purpose solutions, but it makes a much more efficient use of packaging material than alternative packaging formats with higher recycling rates. This is one of the key findings of the FIACE project, a European initiative, whose aim was to assess the value added by flexible packaging in a circular economy and identify both the opportunities and challenges to increase this value by further closing the loop. Flexible Packaging Europe (FPE) has been an active partner in the project together with the TU Delft university and 17 companies covering the entire flexible packaging value chain from raw material to post-consumer recycling and all steps in between.

Another major insight from the FIACE project is that flexible packaging is potentially recyclable. It is already collected in several European countries and should be collected in more countries so that it can enter the existing sorting streams for material recycling and recovery. These conclusions were mirrored by those of a similar initiative on flexible packaging conducted at the UK level (REFLEX). As a result, participants of both initiatives have joined forces to form one European project and continue to develop and deliver the FIACE objectives. This combined project, under the new name of CEFLEX was formally started in December, when more than 30 interested companies and organisations (including FPE) agreed on the next phase, targeted to make flexible packaging add even more value in a circular economy. In addition to stimulating increased collection of flexible packaging in all European countries, the CEFLEX project aims to develop a robust set of design guidelines for flexible packaging to both maximise the overall resource efficiency and optimize the recyclability.

Jean-Paul Duquet, FPE's Director Sustainability, said, "We actively support the new CEFLEX initiative and believe in the combined strengths of the full value chain to demonstrate the positive role flexible packaging plays in the emerging circular economy. Flexible packaging is unique by providing the same functionality as many other packaging solutions but using far less resources. If, on top of that, its end of life recovery can be optimised, it will only further increase the resource efficiency of flexible packaging."

Further information:

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Flexible Packaging Europe's (FPE) members manufacture all types of flexible packaging. FPE comprises more than 70 small and medium sized companies as well as the major European producers of flexible packaging for all materials. These companies cover more than 80% of the European flexible packaging turnover. Also six national flexible packaging associations are members of FPE ensuring consistency between national and European activities and lobbying.