

Brussels, 3 December 2014

THE CONTRIBUTION OF SUSTAINABLE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT TO A CIRCULAR ECONOMY

Multi-stakeholder policy debate to mark ACE's 20th anniversary

"I would like to congratulate ACE – your companies are among the frontrunners, the ones with a leading edge. You understood long ago that environmental protection makes business sense and for the past 20 years have been doing a great job at improving sourcing, resource efficiency and the quality of your products...Your contribution is both valuable and irreplaceable"

- Commissioner Karmenu Vella (video message)

"(...) There is a sense that moving towards a circular economy is now an inevitability. Business must show leadership in moving to greater resource efficiency"

- Tony Long, WWF European Policy Office

"We should learn from industry front-runners who have integrated long-term environmental responsibility in their business plan"

- Sirpa Pietikainen, MEP and President of GLOBE EU

"To optimise resource efficiency, all resources entering the circular economy need to be responsibly managed from the outset, not just at end-of-life. Renewable resources, responsibly managed, are the only viable long-term option for securing sustainable supplies"

- Dennis Jönsson, CEO and President of Tetra Pak

Today's discussions take place 20 years after the first adoption of the EU's Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive (PPWD) and as its institutions debate the European Commission's Circular Economy package, including revision of the PPWD. Participants included European Director of the World Resource Institute Kitty Van Der Heijden, Director of WWF European Policy Office Tony Long, President of GLOBE EU Sirpa Pietikainen MEP, and ACE member CEOs.

The multi-stakeholder forum provided a platform to identify future challenges facing EU resource policy, as well as to take stock of ongoing initiatives of the beverage carton sector represented in ACE, including:

- ACE's worldwide Chain of Custody Commitment on responsible sourcing of our key raw material, paperboard. The ground-breaking undertaking, made seven years ago, committed Elopak, SIG Combibloc and Tetra Pak by 2015 to use in their cartons only wood fibres taken from legal and acceptable sources, all verified by 3rd parties. It is now 93% fulfilled.
- Recycling: from a standing start in the early 1990s, beverage cartons have now reached a 42% recycling rate and a 71% recovery rate Europe-wide.
- Partnership: ACE's engagement in a cooperation agreement with WWF since 2005 aims to shape policy processes to drive responsible forest management in the EU. Reflecting common ground between business and conservation, the elimination of illegal logging from the marketplace provided a joint objective for both organisations to support the development of the EU Timber Regulation.

Future challenges - global and European

The global setting for the EU circular economy initiative was emphasized by a number of participants. Requirements for successful global development, said WRI's Kitty Van Der Heijden, should be based on the three pillars of economy, equity and ecology, and “include new economic models that value natural assets, encourage green innovation and include sustainable consumption and production”. In the words of WWF's Tony Long, “we cannot continue treating the planet as if it is a business in liquidation”.

On the EU vision of a circular economy, comments were more specific:

“The EU Circular Economy policy should not focus on recycling exclusively, but also help improve the sustainability of primary materials when they first enter the economy”, said Elopak's CEO Niels Petter Wright.

Echoing the call earlier made by the European Resource Efficiency Platform for recognising the contribution of sustainable sourcing, Rolf Stangl CEO of SIG Combibloc highlighted the need “to rebalance the discussions on the circular economy. Looking at the product life-cycle equal focus should be given to both the end-of-life and the beginning-of-life, with sustainable sourcing and the use of renewable raw materials recognised as key elements”. “The European Parliament and Council”, added ACE's Advocacy Director Kevin Bradley “would be doing the circular economy a favour by explicitly recognising this contribution”.

Finally, if the Commission, as part of its circular economy programme, really wants to move to a zero landfill economy by 2025, then it will need to make an all-out effort on recycling, says Bradly; this means “at the very least all packaging for which recycling solutions current exist must indeed be recycled”. For all other and new packaging for which recycling solutions do not exist, the answer is innovation - which EU policy should do all in its power to encourage.

Note to Editors

ACE provides a European platform for beverage carton manufacturers and their paperboard suppliers to benchmark and profile cartons as renewable, recyclable and low carbon packaging solutions. Engaging with stakeholders and partners seeking high environmental stewardship, it contributes expertise to EU policy, legislation and standard-setting.

ACE members include beverage carton producers Tetra Pak, SIG Combibloc and Elopak; they develop, manufacture and market systems for the processing, packaging and distribution of food, and produce packaging material at 20 plants in Europe. About 98% of the paperboard used by ACE members in beverage cartons in Europe is produced by Stora Enso in Skoghall (Sweden) and Imatra (Finland), and BillerudKorsnäs in Gävle and Frövi (Sweden), who are also members of ACE. These paper mills and the beverage carton manufacturers in ACE together employ close to 30,000 people worldwide.

For further information please visit the ACE website www.beveragecarton.eu or contact:

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