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Collection Systems for Flexible Packaging in a Circular Economy



- ▶ In a circular economy, all flexible packaging needs to be collected so that it is available for sorting and recycling*. This requires a significant increase in the collection of flexible packaging across Europe. Given differences in population density, geography and system legacy, viable solutions may differ depending on the local context.
- ▶ To maximise the recycling quality of all materials (incl. plastic), organic waste, paper/cardboard and glass should always be collected separately from plastics, other recyclables and remaining waste. To aid consumers and sorting, this approach should be harmonized across Europe.
- ▶ Separate collection of flexible packaging at source is preferred. Flexible packaging can be combined with other packaging, including rigid plastics, metal and beverage cartons.
- ▶ Since a relevant proportion of flexible packaging may remain in the mixed solid waste stream, the additional sorting of flexible packaging from the mixed waste is necessary to maximize recovery and enable circularity.**
- ▶ If separate collection is not viable, mixed waste collection and sorting flexible packaging from mixed waste is an alternative collection option.
- ▶ A well functioning collection system for recycling flexible packaging requires the collaboration of industry, legislators, local authorities and consumers. As public awareness and acceptance is a key component, ongoing consumer engagement is critical.
- ▶ CEFLEX closely monitors developments in collection, sorting and recycling technology and infrastructure that may affect this position.

* Flexible packaging is already collected in all countries but not always such that it is available to be sorted/recycled.

** With the appropriate infrastructure, existing practice shows that these materials can deliver comparable quality recycle.

Value chain alignment on key issues

The **Circular Economy for Flexible Packaging (CEFLEX)** initiative is a collaboration of over 170 European companies, associations and organisations representing the entire value chain of flexible packaging. Together, we work to make all flexible packaging in Europe circular by 2025.

To support CEFLEX's vision and help the entire value chain move forward as one, a facilitated alignment process tackles key issues. Information exchange, analysis, and interviews support participative workshops which create considered positions on each topic so that these can guide transformation to a circular economy. This process is hosted by CEFLEX in collaboration with Swiss university ETH Zurich.