

THE POWER OF RIGID PAPER PACKAGING AND ITS RECYCLABILITY



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Converting your brand's packaging to more sustainable solutions, such as rigid paper containers, can help your business to lower its carbon footprint, as well as increasing its appeal to consumers. Continue reading to find out how rigid paper containers are already helping to drive up recyclability rates in Europe...

Could you be doing more to protect the environment?

Consumers are becoming increasingly aware of their responsibility to act more sustainably, but they recognise that it is not just down to them, at an individual level, to make these changes – brands need to be doing so as well.

In light of this, it is important for brands to continually re-envision and re-develop their packaging, not only to lower their emissions in the long run, but also to be leaders on this issue, to set an example, and to make sustainable packaging more accessible to all consumers.

Sonoco has consistently risen to this challenge over the years by constantly testing its packaging solutions to make them more sustainable. This, combined with significant developments in sustainable packaging manufacturing – and advancements in recycling sortation technologies – means that huge progress is being made.

RECYCLING

In Europe, around 80% of paper material is recycled and efforts are being made to increase this to 90%.

Stakeholders, such as governmental agencies, legislators, Producer Responsibility Organizations (PROs), fibre product recyclers, as well packaging producers and brands, are all working to drive up the recycling rates of fibre-based materials.



Examples of stakeholders taking action include:

- Government legislative bodies increasing mandates for consumer recycling.
- The implementation of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) programmes, where consumer brands are encouraged to select recyclable and responsibly sourced packaging – and are penalised if they do not.
- Packaging producers and brands working together to maximise recyclability by progressively improving packaging design to perform in sorting and recycling, while boosting recycled content.
- Retailers and consumers factoring packaging recyclability into purchasing decisions.



RIGID PAPER CONTAINER RECYCLABILITY: SORTATION TRIALS

Paper recycling rates in Europe and the US are supported by fibre sortation material recovery facilities (MRFs), in which packaging is diverted into the correct fibre bales to be recycled.

Sortation trials have been carried out to determine the effectiveness of various technologies at MRFs when sorting rigid paper containers.

Such technologies include optical Near Infrared (NIR), artificial intelligence (AI) / robotic arms and digital watermarking.

The effectiveness of the sortation technologies rates varied. The highest recovery rate for rigid paper containers, achieved with digital watermarking, was an impressive 98%. A 91% recovery rate was achieved with optical NIR – up from 33% after the design of the rigid paper cans’ was improved. Meanwhile, artificial intelligence (AI) / network robotics – which learned and improved over time – achieved 95% recognition.

Additionally, laboratory simulations of paper mill pulping showed that after barrier removal from the pulp, around 80-90% of recyclable fibrous content could be recovered from the rigid paper container.

BOOST YOUR BRAND’S ECO CREDENTIALS WITH RIGID PAPER CONTAINERS

At Sonoco, we understand that consumers consider recyclable packaging to be more sustainable than single-use packaging. We have taken steps over the years to re-design our packaging and make it more sustainable.

Our EnviroCan™, GREENCAN® and ENVIROSTICK® rigid paper containers have a lower weight and reduced environmental footprint than comparably sized metal cans or other rigid packaging types.

Recyclable by design, the EnviroCan™ rigid paperboard can is made of up to 85% recycled material, while the GREENCAN® recyclable paperboard package is made of 92-98% paperboard.

The packaging, which features a wide range of barrier properties, are suitable for the food and drink, beauty and pharma markets, and are already used by iconic global brands.

WANT TO GO GREENER?



Scan to download Sonoco’s Big Steps to Increase Paper Container Recyclability white paper:



Scan to learn more about Sonoco’s rigid paper cans:

