

Tetra Pak reacts to demand for sustainable packaging solutions

Food packaging and processing company Tetra Pak Southern Africa continues to adapt its value chain to support the circular economy and meet growing demand for sustainable packaging from South African retailers and food and beverage producers.



Stefan Fageräng, managing director of Tetra Pak Southern Africa

According to the company, the growing demand for sustainable products stems from consumers, retailers, producers and post-consumer waste recyclers who increasingly seek the value of carton packaging to support a low-carbon circular economy, supply chain and operational efficiencies, new business and revenue models, job creation and environmental activism.

“Our approach to sustainability encompasses the entire value chain, including the environmental, social, and economic challenges our society faces,” says Stefan Fageräng, managing director of Tetra Pak Southern Africa.

“The understanding of the importance of taking care of our planet is increasing rapidly. Retailers and our customers, driven by consumers, are constantly demanding new and improved sustainability solutions. Based on renewable materials, such as carton fibre, our carton packages naturally have a very favourable and low impact on the environment. Tetra Pak’s aim is to protect food, people and futures and in doing so provide sustainable and responsible solutions to the food industry.”



First traceable F&B packaging using plant-based polymers launched

19 Nov 2019



Rodney Reynders, sustainability cluster leader for the Greater Middle East and Africa region at Tetra Pak, says, “Our sustainability strategy is founded on our commitment to a low-carbon circular economy. We believe that such an economy should take into account not just recycling and reuse, but also the climate impact of raw materials and manufacturing. Our carton packs are made mainly from paperboard, a renewable resource, giving cartons a lower carbon footprint than other types of liquid packaging.

“In partnership with some South African retailers and one of our milk producers, we introduced plant-based closures made from polyethylene derived from sugar cane. This innovation increased the renewable content of the total package to greater than 80%. These innovations support our customers’ and retailers’ sustainability strategies in reducing their climate impact.”

Developing products from recycled materials

Tetra Pak South Africa has several other recycling initiatives underway and has developed new uses for the recycled materials.

“We are constantly working with local rigid plastics product manufacturers to develop products made from recycled plastics

and aluminium elements of the beverage cartons. Some of the products developed include durable pallets for use in logistics systems. These new applications ensure that we close the loop and that valuable raw materials are kept in use for longer,” says Agripa Munyai, sustainability manager at Tetra Pak Southern Africa.



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He adds, “We have some exciting developments here in South Africa, such as the pallets and point-of-sale (POS) materials we are creating. These new applications help our customers with their own transformation journeys by incorporating more sustainable products and methods, further ensuring the protection of people, food and futures throughout the value chain.”

The recycled carton packs are now also used to produce the cores for new reels of carton packs. When new carton packs are produced at the facility in Pinetown, they are produced as flat carton packs in a continuous roll and wound onto reels that can weigh several hundred kilograms each.

They are then sealed for safe and hygienic transportation. The inner cores of those reels, like giant versions of the centre of paper roller-towel, are now made using recycled Tetra Pak cartons.



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9 Jul 2019



Post-consumer waste recycling

Post-consumer waste is recycled by two partners in Gauteng, Mpact Recycling and Gayatri Paper Mill. The two partners have the facilities to separate the various layers of carton packs that serve to protect packaged food and beverage products while offering many additional benefits throughout the supply chain.

Munyai says, “The recyclers are in Gauteng but they have collection points across the country. The recycling rates have steadily increased since 2016, up from 3 709 tonnes in that year to 4 906 tonnes in 2019. But they have more capacity and can handle up to 36,000 tonnes, so there is enormous opportunity for them, for South Africans who choose to act responsibly, and for the kerbside sorters who are an important part of the chain.

“Being able to recycle these products in South Africa means that South African consumers can act responsibly, create jobs and ultimately income for collectors, resulting in growth opportunities for local business.”



What is your contribution to recycling?

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Transition to renewable energy

Tetra Pak Southern Africa continues to improve sustainability in its own operations. The converting factory in Pinetown currently uses renewable credits. The Johannesburg and Cape Town offices are currently transitioning to 100% renewable solar energy in phases.

The company aims to field test an aseptic package made fully from renewable sources by 2022. To complement its packaging innovations, Terta Pak says it continues to drive resource efficiencies with its equipment and services, focusing on minimising water use, food waste and carbon footprint in its customers' operations.

A total donation of R1,5m was also recently made to the Covid-19 relief effort. Half, R750 000, went to FoodForward SA (FFSA) and the other half went to Feed SA.

FFSA recovers edible surplus food from farmers, manufacturers, and retailers, then redistributes it to registered beneficiary organisations that serve the poor across the country. Feed SA is a non-profit organisation with 100% B-BBEE beneficiaries, feeding around 6,500 people a day. It has also established 35 crèches in townships, feeding schemes, classrooms, and helps to renovate existing facilities.

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