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The Packaging Forum backs the Ministry plan to tackle waste

Government's announcement today to move towards co-designed and regulated product stewardship for single-use plastic packaging is a watershed moment for New Zealand.

This is according to one of the country's biggest packaging industry groups, The Packaging Forum, which is backing the Associate Minister for the Environment Eugenie Sage's announcement to begin consultation around implementing regulated product stewardship for packaging.

Chair of The Packaging Forum Rob Langford says the world is undoubtedly facing a plastic crisis due to low recycling rates, excessive packaging and improper disposal. Resource recovery markets in particular are struggling since the enforcement of China's National Sword policy saw the collapse of global markets for mixed plastics (predominantly types 3-7) and mixed paper and cardboard.

"The Packaging Forum has been providing solutions for packaging for a number of years," says Rob. The Forum currently operates the only government accredited, voluntary product stewardship programmes for glass bottles and jars, and for soft plastics, alongside delivering the public place recycling initiatives such as the Litter Less Recycle More project.

"We are also in the early stages of developing a product stewardship programme for rigid food and beverage plastics, so we are 100% with the Minister in industry taking the lead on improving outcomes for their food and beverage packaging."

"Regulated product stewardship means all players do their part towards end-of-life solutions," Rob says. "We agree that removing the burden of free-riders, those brands that don't currently participate in product stewardship schemes, would provide a level playing field and allow us to increase the reach and effectiveness of schemes."

Product stewardship sees people and business take responsibility for the products they make and sell at the end of their useful life, so that these products are recycled, reused or repurposed. Regulated product stewardship requires the whole of industry to participate.

The Forum last year made a pledge on behalf of its members, including manufacturers, brand owners and retailers, to make all their packaging reusable, recyclable or compostable by 2025.

"Addressing these issues is complex, with many aspects to consider, such as the recyclability of different types of plastic, labelling and material definitions, and the role plastic packaging plays in food safety and preventing food waste."



“New Zealand now has a platform to work together across all parties to develop bespoke onshore solutions the envy of the world. Simply transferring methods from overseas leaves us exposed to achieving mediocrity.”

To achieve effective product stewardship, significant investment will undoubtedly be required in new and leading technologies, Rob says. “We consider this should be a focus of future funding rounds of the Waste Minimisation Fund. The \$40 million in funding already announced through the Provincial Growth Fund for recycling and reuse projects will also play a key part.”

“The Packaging Forum welcomes the opportunity to work with the Minister’s office, Ministry for the Environment, local government and the resource recovery sector, as well as other interested groups from industry and the wider community to progress co-designed and regulated product stewardship,” Rob says.

For more information about The Packaging Forum visit www.recycling.kiwi.nz

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