New EU packaging rules explained

Published by AGRINFO on 27 Jan 2023; Revised 01 Apr 2026

Regulation 2025/40 on packaging and packaging waste

What is changing and why?

New European Union (EU) rules on packaging and packaging waste, including design and waste management, are set by the packaging and packaging waste Regulation 2025/40 (PPWR).

This Regulation establishes new rules for all packaging and packaging waste made of any material, with the aim to:

- avoid and reduce packaging waste, and stimulate reuse
- make all packaging on the EU market recyclable in an economically viable way
- increase the recycling of packaging materials, especially plastic, and their reuse.

These rules will apply from different dates (see Table 1).

In 2026, the European Commission published a guidance document addressing questions raised by stakeholders about the new rules. It has also published a Frequently Asked Questions document that will be regularly updated.

Restricted packaging formats

From 1 January 2030, the PPWR forbids single use plastic packaging for quantities of fresh fruit and vegetables <1.5 kg, such as nets, bags, trays, and containers. Individual EU Member States may authorise this packaging where:

- it is needed to avoid water or other fluid loss, microbiological hazards or physical shocks, or oxidation
- there is no other way to separate organic and non-organic fruits and vegetables at the point of sale.

The European Commission will provide more detailed guidelines by 12 February 2027, including a list of authorised packaging for specific fruits and vegetables <1.5 kg (see Figure 1).

Sustainability requirements

Under the new rules, when packaged food is exported from non-EU countries to the European Union, the packaging must be compliant with sustainability requirements. This includes:

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- from 12 August 2026, food contact packaging must not contain polyfluorinated alkyl substances (PFAS) over the maximum levels (Table 2)
- by 2030, packaging must be recyclable
- by 2030, plastic packaging must contain a minimum amount of recycled plastic (Table 3) – but this obligation does not apply to food packaging if that amount of recycled content would be a risk for human health
- by 2030, packaging must be as small and light as possible while still being effective and ensuring food safety
- from 12 February 2028, sticky labels on fruit and vegetables must be industrially compostable.

Labelling

Packaging must be correctly labelled with:

- standard pictograms showing the composition of packaging materials, to help consumers to sort materials for recycling – applies to all types of packaging (including e-commerce packaging), with the exception of transport packaging
- labels on reusable packaging stating that it is reusable – QR codes can be used to give information on reusability and collection points
- the share of recycled content, where relevant.

Packaging must be identifiable. It must bear a type, batch, or serial number allowing identification, or this must be provided in a document accompanying the packaged product.

Messages about the positive or neutral environmental impacts of packaging can only be used where packaging exceeds the minimum sustainability requirements of the PPWR.

Conformity

All operators in the supply chain are responsible for sharing information to prove compliance with the PPWR requirements. This information must be passed along the supply chain.

- Packaging manufacturers must provide a conformity declaration that the packaging is in line with the new rules before placing the packaging on the EU market. This documentation must be passed along the supply chain, and can be requested by EU Member State control authorities.
- Non-EU manufacturers of recycled plastic packaging must demonstrate that plastic is produced in a way that is equivalent to EU standards for collection of plastic and environmental emissions.
- Non-EU operators that sell packaged products directly to EU consumers or professional users for distribution, consumption, or use in an unchanged form will be considered as

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packaging producers and can be requested by each EU country to appoint an authorised representative for extended producer responsibility (EPR).

Actions

Under the PPWR (Art. 18), packaging and packaged food exported from non-EU countries to the EU must:

- comply with the sustainability requirements set out in Arts. 5–11
- be correctly labelled
- be accompanied by the correct documentation
- be correctly identified
- have undergone a conformity assessment.

Non-EU exporters of packaged foods to the EU market must ensure by the end of 2025 that:

- any packaging has undergone an appropriate conformity assessment procedure
- the relevant technical documentation has been drawn up by the packaging manufacturer
- the manufacturer has provided a written declaration of conformity for the packaging type.

Suppliers exporting packaged foods should engage early with packaging manufacturers to review testing, monitoring, and documentation processes. Packaging manufacturers must be able to provide the information and documentation necessary for the exporter manufacturer to demonstrate compliance with this Regulation.

Exporters will need long-term strategies for sourcing packaging that can meet new recyclability criteria and, in the case of plastic packaging, for ensuring that recycled plastic is produced in a manner equivalent to EU standards.

Suppliers of fruit and vegetables should closely monitor on the ban on single use plastic packaging for certain fresh fruits and vegetables weighing <1.5 kg. This includes the non-exhaustive list of exemptions to be published by the European Commission by February 2027, and additional exemptions set by EU countries from January 2030.

Suppliers of fruit and vegetables should also explore sources of industrially compostable sticky labels, which will be mandatory from 12 February 2028. They should monitor whether individual EU countries are additionally requesting these sticky labels to be home compostable.

Suppliers exporting packaged products who are considered as producers (because they sell products directly to an EU consumer or business for distribution, consumption, or use in an unchanged form) should monitor the national law of each EU country to verify if they must

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appoint an authorised representative for extended producer responsibility (EPR) in that country.

Timeline

Regulation 2025/40 applies from **12 August 2026**. However, the rules apply from different dates (see Table 1).

For more information see the full record on the AGRINFO website – where you can also view the latest AGRINFO Update newsletters and search the database.

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Tables & Figures

Table 1
Dates when PPWR requirements enter into force[1]

Category	Requirements	From
Substances of concern	Food-contact packaging must not contain concentrations of PFAS[2] higher than the levels shown in Table 2	12 Aug 2026
Compostable packaging	Single use tea, coffee, and related beverage bags, and sticky labels attached to fruit and vegetables, must be compostable	12 Feb 2028
Labelling	Packaging must be marked with a harmonised label (pictogram) to inform about the composition of packaging material and help consumers to sort recyclable materials	12 Aug 2028
	Reusable packaging must be marked with a label showing its reusability	12 Feb 2029
Prohibited packaging	Single use plastic packaging cannot be used for quantities of fresh fruit and vegetables <1.5 kg	1 Jan 2030
Packaging minimisation	Packaging must be reduced to the minimum volume/weight needed to ensure its functionality	
Minimum recycled content	Plastic packaging must contain at least the minimum percentage of recycled plastic per unit of packaging (see Table 3)	
	Packaging must be designed for recycling	
Recycling packaging	Packaging with less than 70% recyclability cannot be put on the market	
	Packaging will have to meet Grade A or B to be placed on the market	1 Jan 2038

[1] PPWR: Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation 2025/40.
[2] PFAS: polyfluorinated alkyl substances.

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Source: based on Regulation 2025/40

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Table 2 Limits on concentrations of PFAS in packaging	
Type of polyfluorinated alkyl substances (PFAS)	Limit
Any PFAS as measured with target PFAS analysis (polymeric PFAS excluded)	25 parts per billion (ppb)
Sum of PFAS measured as sum of targeted PFAS analysis	250 parts per billion (ppb)
PFAS (polymeric PFAS included)[1]	50 parts per million (ppm)

[1] If total fluorine (F) exceeds 50 mg F/kg, the manufacturer, importer, or downstream user of packaging must, if requested, demonstrate proof that the fluorine is measured as content of either PFAS or non-PFAS.



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Source: based on Regulation 2025/40, Art. 5(5)

Table 3 Minimum percentage of recycled plastic per unit of packaging		
Type of packaging[1]	Minimum percentage recycled content	
	By 2030	By 2040
Contact-sensitive packaging[2] (except single use beverage bottles) with polyethylene terephthalate (PET)	30	50
Contact-sensitive packaging[2] (except single use beverage bottles) made from plastic materials other than PET	10	25
Single use plastic beverage bottles	30	65
Plastic packaging other than the above	35	65

[1] Certain sorts of packaging (e.g. certain medical packaging) do not have to fulfil these criteria.
[2] Contact-sensitive packaging includes packaging that comes into direct contact with food.

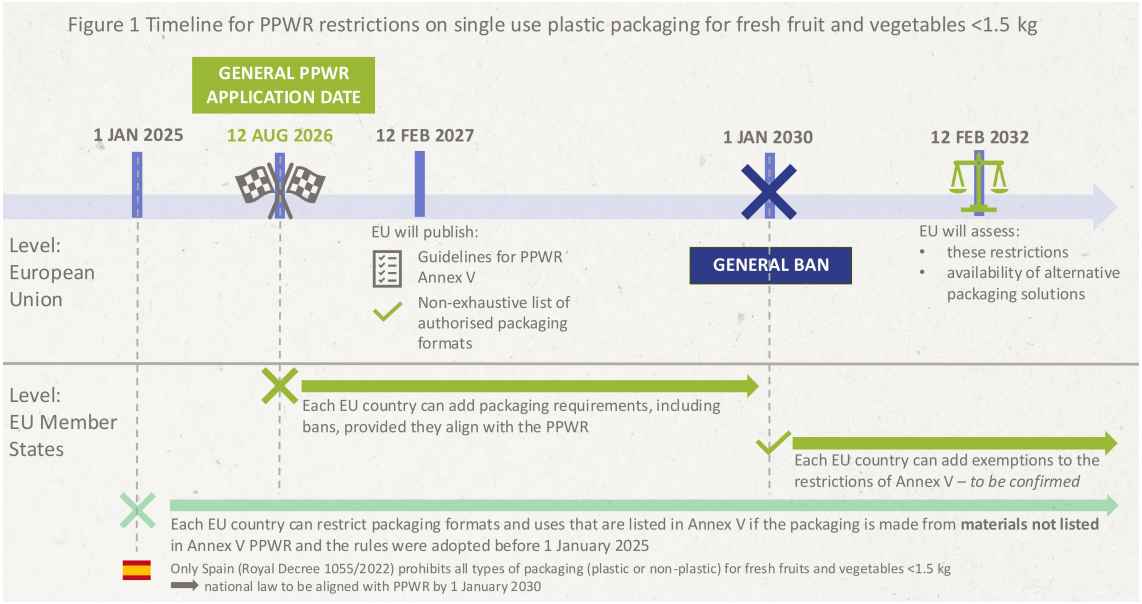


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Source: based on Regulation 2025/40, Arts. 7(1,2)

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Figure 1 Timeline for PPWR restrictions on single use plastic packaging for fresh fruit and vegetables <1.5 kg



Source: based on Regulation 2025/40, Annex V

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