

Review of packaging and packaging waste rules

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Regulation

[Compromise agreement](#) on a proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on packaging and packaging waste

What is changing and why?

The European Union (EU) has agreed to new rules on all packaging made of any material, with the aim that all packaging can be reused or recycled by 2030.

Sustainability requirements

Under the new Regulation, when packaged food is exported from non-EU countries to the EU, the packaging must be compliant with sustainability requirements and must not contain harmful substances exceeding the set maximum levels. This means:

- by mid-2027, packaging must not contain polyfluorinated alkyl substances (PFAS) over the maximum levels (Table 1 below)
- by 2030, it must be recyclable
- by 2030, plastic packaging must contain a minimum amount of recycled plastic (Table 2 below)
- by 2030, packaging must be as small and light as possible while still being effective and ensuring food safety
- by mid-2027, sticky labels on fruits and vegetables must be compostable
- from 2030, single use (non-reusable) plastic packaging must not be used for quantities of fresh fruit and vegetables <1.5 kg

Conformity

- Packaging manufacturers must provide a conformity declaration that the packaging is in line with new sustainability rules.
- 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.

Labelling and documentation

Packaging must be correctly labelled:

- with pictograms showing the composition of packaging material to help consumers to sort materials for recycling
- (for reusable packaging) to show its reusability, and QR codes to track materials and give information on reusability and collection points
- with the share of recycled content, where relevant.

Packaging manufacturers must provide technical documentation demonstrating that it meets sustainability requirements. This documentation must be passed along the supply chain and can be requested by EU Member State control authorities.

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.

Actions

The new rules are expected to create new challenges for suppliers of packaged food, including:

- ensuring compliance with new requirements such as content of PFAS in packaging materials
- by 2030 ensuring adequate access to sufficient materials that meet new sustainability standards
- demonstrating that recycled plastic is produced to recycling and environmental standards equivalent to those in the EU
- for suppliers of fresh fruit and vegetables in quantities <1.5 kg, finding adequate alternatives to single use plastics that can guarantee the quality and safety of produce.


Suppliers exporting packaged foods should engage early with packaging manufacturers to evaluate current capacity and potential strategies to meet the new sustainability requirements, and to review testing, monitoring, and documentation procedures.

Timeline

The final Regulation is expected in the second quarter of 2024. If this timetable is met, the new rules would apply from the end of 2025, with recyclability and recycled plastic targets applying from 2030.

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.


Tables & Figures

Table 1 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 by enforcement authorities, demonstrate proof that the fluorine is measured as content of either PFAS or non-PFAS.	
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Source: [Compromise agreement](#) on a proposal for a regulation on packaging and packaging waste

Table 2 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) as the major component	30	50
Contact-sensitive packaging ^[2] made from plastic materials other than PET, except single-use plastic beverage bottles	10	-
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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