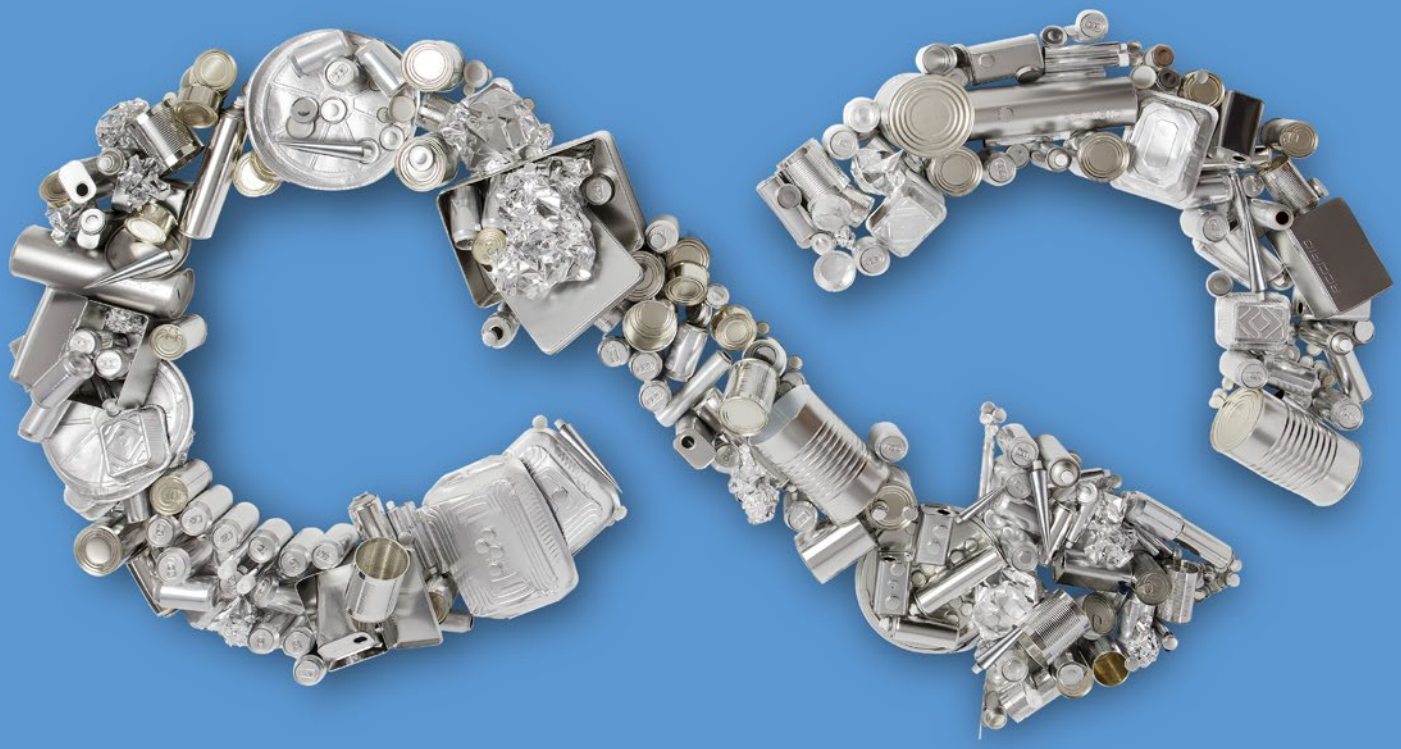


CALL FOR ACTIONS

MPE The European trade association representing the rigid metal packaging industry

metalpackagingeurope.org

Metal Packaging Europe

INTRODUCTION

Metal Packaging Europe (MPE) is the united voice of Europe's rigid metal packaging industry, covering both aluminium and steel. We bring together manufacturers, suppliers, and national associations.

Our members produce over 140 billion cans per year, operating around 350 production sites and directly employing around 66,000 people. We promote and support the positive attributes and image of metal packaging through joint marketing, sustainability, and technical initiatives.

WHY METAL?

Easy and economical to sort and separate from non-metallic materials, rigid metal packaging achieves some of the highest recycling rates among packaging materials.

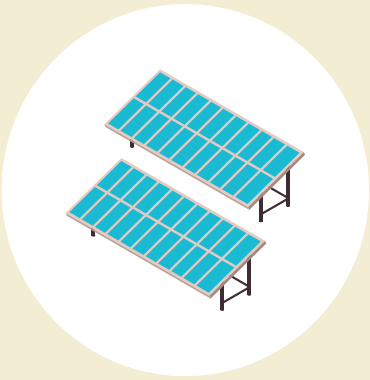
Regardless of the number of times metal is recycled, its inherent properties do not change. Once used, properly collected, sorted, and processed at the end of its life, metal packaging becomes a valuable, circular resource for continuous production loops. This allows it to support numerous value chains and applications including beverages, food, chemicals, aerosols, and more.

UP TO 80.5% RECYCLING RATE FOR RIGID METAL PACKAGAING

Metal packaging is among the most recyclable packaging in Europe. The recycling rate for steel packaging is 80.5% (2022) and 76% for aluminium beverage cans (2021). Both segments aim to further increase recycling, with a global commitment by the aluminium can industry to reach nearly 100% by 2050.

REDUCING OUR IMPACT ON CLIMATE CHANGE BY 30-50%

Cans are becoming lighter while maintaining their safety and strength, improving energy and resource efficiency. Since 2000, we have achieved significant sustainability advancements, reducing our impact on climate change by 30% for steel and 50% for aluminium.



PACKAGING MADE FROM RECYCLED METAL USES UP TO 95% LESS ENERGY

The circular economy is vital for decarbonisation in the metal packaging sector, as recycling materials uses significantly less energy than producing new ones, 70% less for steel and up to 95% less for aluminium.

MAXIMISE THE CIRCULARITY OF RIGID METAL PACKAGING

The ambition of the Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR) to build a greener, more circular future in Europe presents a significant opportunity for the rigid metal packaging industry, which already meets high-quality recyclability requirements. By collaborating across the value chain to advance decarbonisation efforts and increasing collection and recycling rates, we can further maximise the circularity of rigid metal packaging.

CANNED FRUIT & VEG RETAINS NUTRIENTS VALUE FOR UP TO 5 YEARS

Metal packaging is robust, stackable, lightproof, and hermetically sealed, providing comprehensive protection against a wide range of external contaminants. This ensures that products remain safe and fresh throughout their shelf life. Fruits and vegetables destined for canning are typically packaged within four hours of harvesting, preserving their exceptional freshness and nutritional value for up to five years without refrigeration. Metal packaging excels in safety and efficiency, delivering unparalleled protection and maintaining product quality.

MPE ROADMAP

MPE members have embraced the green transition and are actively contributing to tackling climate change by providing sustainable packaging solutions for the future. The roadmap is based on three pillars:

1. NET ZERO AND THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY

Our sector aims to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2050 and drive the circular economy forward.

2. SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

We are focused on delivering social and environmental benefits through rigid metal packaging.

3. TRANSPARENCY

We support stakeholder interest in sustainability and invite engagement, recognising the importance of transparency.

Metal packaging producers are ready to embrace change and invest in a sustainable future. To realise the green transition and achieve a true packaging circularity, we need the support of EU policymakers and governments. Our requests for the next legislative term are:

1 A NEW EUROPEAN CIRCULAR MATERIAL PLAN

The new circular economy action plan adopted in March 2020 introduced initiatives spanning the entire life cycle of products. However, it remains incomplete as it primarily addresses the circularity of products and packaging from a waste perspective.

We believe the EU needs a new European Circular Material Plan grounded in a material approach to enhance its strategic autonomy. The new EU agenda should delineate a clear strategy for resources and materials, recognising their role in addressing the climate crisis.

This new European Circular Material Plan should:

- Shift from waste to resource frameworks based on material circularity.
- Integrate circularity into EU climate targets.
- Recognise "permanent materials" like aluminium and steel that can be recycled again and again without losing their intrinsic properties.
- Develop metrics to measure the full material circularity of products, including packaging.
- Differentiate and optimise recycling processes in the waste hierarchy to recognise multiple recycling methods and ensure that reuse and recycling complement each other.
- Add a definition of 'high-quality recycling' in the Waste Framework Directive.
- Recognise the real economic value of materials in the circular economy.
- Maintain a level playing field, acknowledging material-specific contributions.

2 THE BETTER REGULATION AGENDA SHOULD ENSURE FAIR, HARMONISED AND TAILORED POLICIES

The European Commission has established a Better Regulation approach to assess the policy's economic, social and environmental impacts and ensure consistency in the legislation.

A significant amount of legislation has been enacted under the EU Green Deal, which will be further supplemented by implementing acts. The Commission should consistently apply principles of Better Regulation to this secondary legislation. It should:

- Prevent segmentation of the Single Market through harmonised legislation.
- Improve consistency and alignment within the EU legislation. For example, avoid imposing restrictions on chemical substances in food packaging, like in the PPWR, when there is a specific regulation on food contact materials.
- Tailor secondary legislation to the unique characteristics of materials.

- Base policies on scientific evidence and utilise industry expertise.
- Optimise both single-use and reusable packaging systems to achieve the best environmental outcomes.
- Involve downstream users in the development and implementation of the sustainable chemicals strategy.

3 SUPPORT THE COMPETITIVENESS OF EUROPEAN INDUSTRY TO MEET THE GREEN DEAL OBJECTIVES

Steel and Aluminium are key materials underpinning the growth of the European economy. Decarbonising these industries involves exploring various pathways, leveraging the advantages of the circular economy, and collaborating with supply chain partners. To fully achieve the EU's circular economy and decarbonisation goals, the rigid metal packaging industries require supportive tools, investments and legislation. Policymakers should:

- Promote decarbonisation of the value chain, focusing on green energy.
- Ensure fair EU trade policy that protects the entire metal packaging value chain.
- Enable EU trade policy to support the competitiveness of the rigid metal packaging industry.
- Align EU trade measures with global climate policy instruments.
- Encourage investment in "green steel" and "green aluminium" production.
- Support investments in aluminium and steel remelting capacity across Europe.

TOWARDS MORE SUSTAINABLE PACKAGING

Global resources are limited and the key objectives for every industry are to reduce dependence on raw materials and prevent waste.

Metal packaging is an ideal solution for these challenges. In Europe, the recycling rate for steel packaging is 80.5% (2022) and 76% for aluminium beverage cans (2021)[1]. In the future with the right policies and incentives, the industry can further increase recycling and ensure metal is kept in the material loop.

Metal is a permanent material whose inherent properties do not change, regardless of the number of times it goes through a recycling process. Once produced for the first time using green energy and technologies and properly collected and processed at the end of its life, it becomes a raw material for new and endless production loops – thus making net zero a reality.

Metal packaging already supports safe and sustainable closed material loops in which packaging materials retain their properties after recycling, time and time again. We believe that by working together and with the right support we can create an even more sustainable future for packaging and contribute even more to a fully circular European economy.

We look forward to collaborating with all the parties to make this vision a reality.

[1] https://metalpackagingeurope.org/sustainability

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