

The Blue Couch Series

A SUMMARY OF EPISODE 7
EN



Functional paper packaging – the path towards greater recyclability

This episode of the Sappi series that brings together experts and innovators from the paper industry to discuss the latest developments features:

JULIAN THIELEN head of the Made for Recycling service at Interseroh, Germany's pioneering integrated environmental services company

KERSTIN DIETZE Sappi's key account manager for Paper and Packaging Solutions

GUSTAVO DUARTE manager of Competence Center Packaging Solutions at Sappi.

The three sit together on the Sappi Blue Couch to explore what it takes for brand owners to make the switch to sustainable packaging a success.

WHY THIS SUBJECT NOW?

Because the demand for environmentally friendly packaging continues to grow in Europe and across the globe, as brands follow consumers in demanding a greater accent on sustainability, and customers and companies set their sights beyond mere recycling and towards the creation of a genuinely circular economy.

Plastic bag bans in towns, cities and countries go hand-in-hand with the likes of Extended Producer Responsibilities (EPRs) being adopted in countries including France, Germany and the UK. Meanwhile, the decline of the pandemic has added further impetus to consumer-led demands for more responsible packaging options.

All this adds up to an already buoyant sustainable packaging market that is expected by analysts to achieve annual growth rates of between 5% and 7.5% throughout the next five years. And that adds up to a big opportunity for forward-thinking brands.

WHAT ARE THE KEY ISSUES DISCUSSED BY THE PANEL?

- What needs to be considered when a brand owner is weighing up the pros and cons of making a switch to sustainable packaging?
- What are issues and obstacles when it comes to defining recyclability and testing sustainable packaging?
- How do brands avoid accusations of greenwashing and make a genuine step forward with their products and packaging?

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THE CONVERSATION?

- There's nothing simple about sustainable packaging. As Julian Thielen points out, "For the end consumer, it may be impossible to see whether the packaging they have in their hands is a multi-layer material, what material is used and if it is recyclable material."
- Simple or not, sustainable functional paper packaging and the practical issues surrounding it are going to become more important over coming months and years.
- When it comes to making the most of the opportunities provided by switching to sustainable packaging, there's only one route to take – detailed collaboration between brand owners, packaging manufacturers and independent assessors. As Kerstin Dietze emphasises, "Each product you pack – be it food products, be it chocolate, be it dehydrated soup, for example – needs completely different functionality of the packaging to protect the goods."
- Such collaboration is the best way to develop new solutions using new materials – and to avoid accusations of greenwashing. As Kerstin Dietze also says, "There is a lot of uncertainty about new materials... hence it is very important to have from a third part an objective label that proves that they have been tested objectively."
- Industry collaborations can be on a small or large scale, depending on the stage each brand is at on its circular economy journey. As Julian Thielen says, "The collaborators will see where is the knowledge of the customer, what is the status quo and what is the low-hanging fruit."
- The lack of Europe-wide agreed standards is a problem to be overcome. As Kerstin Dietze remarks, "Today, in every European country you have different standards. We have in Europe, I think, at least five different test methods. Also, the definition of what is recyclable in the different countries is completely different."
- Time is of the essence – meaningful collaboration between brand owners, packaging manufacturers, independent assessors and governments is a route that demands to be taken today, not tomorrow. As Gustavo Duarte puts it: "The train has left the station, and there's no stopping it."

The Blue Couch episode 'Functional paper packaging – the path towards greater recyclability' is available to [watch here](#).