



Nextek - Case Study

Marks & Spencer Launches The World's First Plastic Milk Bottle Using Recycled Material

Marks & Spencer has launched the world's first plastic milk bottle using recycled material. Following a trial involving 60,000 recycled milk bottles, all Marks & Spencer organic milk bottles will now use 10% recycled high density polyethylene (HDPE). The move is part of Marks & Spencer's new £200m 'eco-plan', Plan A, which includes a commitment for M&S to use packaging materials from sustainable or recycled sources.

It is the first time that content from plastic milk bottles collected from household waste has been recycled back into food packaging fit for consumer use. Using groundbreaking technology, the worldwide first was developed by an industry wide collaboration between Marks & Spencer, Dairy Crest, Nampak and WRAP (the Waste and Resources Action Programme).

Currently UK households use over 130,000 tonnes of plastic milk bottles each year. To date, disposal post-use has either seen bottles sent to landfill or recycled into lower grade products such as compost and wheelie bins. Today's announcement provides a third greener alternative for disposal whereby used plastic milk bottles are sorted, flaked and washed before undergoing a 'super clean' recycling process. The resulting food quality plastic (or polymer) is then added to virgin HDPE and made back into plastic milk bottles. M&S will encourage customers to recycle even more of their plastic milk bottles through clear on-pack labelling.



Milk Bottles with 30% recycled content.

The technology was developed as M&S and Dairy Crest sought to find a way of using more recycled content in food packaging. Dairy Crest then worked with, among others, Nampak Plastics, who manufacture the bottles, and Nextek, who provided additional technical input, to develop the innovative heat treatment. Funding for the project and trial was supplied by WRAP. The world first innovation has already been recognised in the Starpack Industry Awards 2007, the UK's premier packaging awards, where it is a finalist in two categories: Best Innovation to Reduce Waste and Best Use of Innovative Material.

James Crick, Commercial Director, Nampak says: "This exciting initiative is totally in line with our policy of being at the forefront of introducing environmental initiatives and improvements into the UK milk packaging industry. "

"The aim of this project is to dramatically increase the recycling rate of plastic bottles in the UK. By working with our project partners, we are making a major contribution to boost UK plastics recycling rates."

Marks & Spencer organic milk in bottles using recycled packaging materials is on sale now.

M&S Head of Packaging, Helene Roberts said: "To be part of the team that has found a way to recycle plastic back into food packaging for the first time is a fantastic result. It's important that we all find ways of reducing our impact on the environment and Marks & Spencer is leading the way in using materials from recycled sources as well as helping customers to recycle more." Helene added: "As far as we are concerned, this is just the start of the process. As further recycled HDPE plastic becomes available we aim to increase the recycled content in our plastic milk bottles and use it across our entire fresh milk range."

Dairy Crest Communication Director, Nicole Lander said: "This launch is an important step towards finding a more environmentally sustainable solution for dairy packaging. Along with the other project partners, Dairy Crest has worked hard to achieve this result. As the first dairy company to sign the Courtauld Commitment, we are taking a leading position in the industry in working towards minimising our impact on the environment."

WRAP Chief Executive, Jenny Price said: "This is a major breakthrough for UK recycling. Incorporating recycled plastic into everyday products like milk bottles is vital if we are to gain the maximum environmental benefit from recycling, and is great news for the growing numbers of people who are recycling their plastic bottles."

http://www.edie.net/awards/nextek_waste_recycling.asp