

Day, place: 6 Dec 2018 DG ENV

Company: Unilever

Purpose of the discussion: To discuss issues related to plastics packaging

ENV representatives: HoU Hugo Schally (ENV B1) & [REDACTED] (ENV B1)

Unilever (vicepresident RJ Hamer) explained that they are setting up a Sustainable Food Initiative (SFI), with 12 companies and Wageningen university. SFI will develop scenarios, and talk to all parts in the circle.

It consists of three parts: R&D; Field / implementation; Consumer engagement or "living lab". As part of this, food packaging is reengineered.

Unilever wants to reduce packaging and make it recyclable by improving the system, which needs to become simpler, with less polymer types.

Expanded shelf life is not a self-standing objective and has its limits.

Some issues:

- Shortage of PCR today
- No quality standard on PCR
- Difficulty of traceability imports
- No incentive to sorters for more pure material
- Guidelines from EFSA on food quality materials needed
- Possible links with CODEX

Unilever rather wants to push for more recycling than for biodegradability, except maybe for specific uses.

Unilever also supported requirements for recycled content as been proposed by EP in the SUP directive.

Finally Unilever asked how to deal with big investments that could raise the footprint in a specific place, but would have an overall positive effect on the system: issue of allocation and cost and benefit sharing.

COM suggested to explain this project at the Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform annual conference in March 2019 (incl. the website), possibly on the second day. Also participation to the CE missions was suggested.

COM saw also various links with the work on PEF.

Docs shared: none

Conclusions / follow up

Unilever offered to send two notes:

- The need for standards that will also help incentivise the production of high-quality PCR plastics, including a proposal to introduce three different quality levels per use category: respectively allowing an uptake of 25%, of 50 % and of 100 % PCR plastics. This will be joined by a request for harmonisation of inclusion levels across Europe.
- The role of the CODEX ALIMENTARIUS in defining standards.

COM to check the potential contribution of Unilever at the forthcoming Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform annual conference