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Two-thirds of German consumers oppose mandatory deposit schemes

Xx June 2023: New regulations forcing the introduction of reusable packaging in hospitality outlets has been met with resistance from German consumers, according to a new survey by Pro Carton, the European Association of Carton and Cartonboard manufacturers. More than 1,000 German consumers were polled about their preferences on packaging materials, in light of recent developments to promote reuse over recycling.

Two-thirds (66%) of respondents demonstrated a low acceptance level of mandatory deposit schemes, suggesting the introduction of a minimal deposit scheme for reusable plastic packaging would reduce the frequency with which they shop, dine or order with affected brands. 28% would be unaffected, while only 6% favour the move and would likely increase their consumption or order frequency.

In the fast-food setting, behaviours are largely the same, with 61% preferring to dispose of their packaging for recycling, compared to 39% who would choose to store, rinse and return reusable plastic packaging to a collection point. Meanwhile, confidence in outlets to adequately clean reusable plastic packaging, remains low, raising concerns on how outlets can guarantee food hygiene amid these changes.

The sentiment identified by respondents is mirrored in their preferences for recyclable packaging with almost two-thirds more, or much more likely to choose a brand that uses recyclable packaging, over a competitor that uses reusable plastic packaging. Investment and research are also favoured in this space with over two-thirds (67%) preferring brands to invest in biodegradable, carton containers that can be recycled, instead of reusable plastic packaging (33%).

The research, conducted in May 2023, once again highlights consumer confidence in cartons and cartonboard, with over three-quarters (75%) identifying recyclable and biodegradable carton packaging as better for the environment.



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Speaking about the findings, **Winfried Muehling, Marketing and Communications Director, Pro Carton,** said: “Few would doubt that reusable packaging can be an important driver towards a circular economy. It offers several advantages for specific usage occasions and can support the reduction of unnecessary packaging . However, in advocating solely for reusable packaging, we risk jeopardising its objectives by not giving sufficient consideration to one thing: consumer engagement.

“As the results of our recent consumer survey demonstrates, there is already low consumer acceptance. Consumer cooperation will be essential to securing high return rates, and high rotation rates. There will be different requirements for take-out and in-house consumption, for the city and out-of-city locations. While reusable packaging has its purpose, there is no “one size fits all”. Both solutions can complement each other to unlock the low carbon packaging circular economy in line with the ambitious target of the EU Green Deal. We strongly advise decision makers to consider the voice of the consumer and to use scientific knowledge in the decision for the best packaging system. This will drive the best solution for the environment.”

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