

Sustainable Packaging Innovation Forum

March 10th-11th 2026 | Amsterdam

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From risk management to value creation*

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Day 1, Oct. 28th Unpacking the challenge: the 'why' and 'how' of sustainable innovation

9.00am-9.20am Breakthrough by design: How R&D innovation turns packaging challenges into new business opportunities

Innovation in packaging sustainability is all but a siloed process. From understanding the key drivers, to developing a viable strategy and delivering on implementation, market-scale adoption of solutions requires a huge effort in coordination. This is true both internally—involving experts from packaging development and sourcing, to regulatory, logistics, waste management and marketing—and amongst stakeholders in the value chain—with business, finance, industry and civil society groups at large all playing a crucial role in the transition to new products and systems.

In this session, we'll look at the 'why' and 'how' behind packaging innovation, reflecting on how sustainability strategy plays an essential role in building brand value and meeting core business goals.

9.20am-10.00am The PPWR implementation playbook: Essential requirements, timelines, and business impact

The Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation has been in force since early 2025 and will fully enter the implementation stage from August 2026. Looking ahead to 2030, companies will have to meet requirements ranging from minimum reuse rates and recycled content requirements to recyclability classifications, material composition, and the phasing out of certain chemicals or packaging formats.

This session acts as a pragmatic check point. We'll assess the state of progress and reflect on what's needed to be ready for the short- and long-term checkpoints.

- **Essential requirements and timelines for implementation: who is responsible for what, when?**
A practical overview of phased deadlines through 2030 and beyond, the data companies must collect now, and the critical 5-year requirements to start preparing for today
- **Business impact, strategic outlook: building infrastructure for smart compliance** We'll look at the dual focus needed for PPWR readiness:
 - Supply chain data alignment to track and verify packaging information
 - Internal operational alignment to break silos between procurement, R&D, regulatory, and sustainability to embed compliance into daily workflows

10:00am-10:40 **Right-sizing packaging sustainability: Matching packaging solutions to operational realities, business goals and use-case needs**

While compliance can drive investment in packaging sustainability, it's only part of the equation. Packaging must first fulfil its core functions—protecting products, ensuring safety and enabling distribution—all while managing costs and meeting business goals. Being strategic in sustainability means finding solutions that work within these real-world constraints, not despite them. In this session we'll discuss:

- **How to tailor solutions to context:** Why one-size-fits-all sustainability strategies fail, and how product categories, distribution models, shelf-life requirements, and consumption patterns demand different packaging approaches
- **Decision-making frameworks that balance trade-offs:** What assessment tools and criteria leading companies use to evaluate packaging options—weighing carbon footprint, recyclability, cost, performance, supply chain readiness, and end-of-life infrastructure to find solutions that optimize across multiple functions
- **Consumer acceptance:** Which solutions really address behavioural friction, for example around returning packaging, sorting materials, accepting appearance changes, or paying premiums

10:40am-11:20am *Break and speed networking*

11:20am-12:00pm **How strategic collaboration drives market leadership: case study on flexible packaging recycling**

The PPWR provisions are increasing demand for food-grade recycled polypropylene, and several technologies have proven technically viable in industrial trials. But technical proof isn't enough. Scaling innovation requires moving from cross-industry pilots to intentional, coordinated implementation. This session examines how brands, retailers, and system innovators are navigating the journey from promising technology to operational reality in flexible packaging recycling.

- **From proof-of-concept to market readiness** - Understanding what trials revealed about solutions' technical viability, and the critical gap between "it works in trials" and "it works at commercial scale"
- **Collaboration to de-risk emerging technologies** - How clear problem definition, aligned incentives, and collective action can navigate bottlenecks (infrastructure gaps, cost allocation, standardization needs) and anticipate unintended consequences
- **Advancing flexibles recycling** - Concrete next steps for different value chain actors: what brands need to commit to, what infrastructure investments sorting facilities require, what policy support enables scale

12:00pm-12:30pm **Reality check: Is a focus on recycling enough to drive sustainability progress and market value?**

Recycling is still seen as an important part of packaging's circular transition, yet the business model is showing cracks. Recent closures of European recycling facilities and industry warnings about a collapse in competitiveness raise uncomfortable questions: if recycled materials can't compete with virgin plastics, and if brands opt for cheaper imports over local recycle, can a recycling-dependent strategy actually deliver on sustainability and circularity goals?

- **The recycled price gap:** Why recycled plastics struggle to compete economically—low fossil fuel prices, energy-intensive processing, quality challenges, and inconsistent supply—and whether current PCR mandates alone can bridge this competitiveness gap or if the model needs fundamental restructuring
- **Supply, demand, and misaligned incentives:** The disconnect between regulatory requirements for recycled content and market realities—when brands face choices between expensive local recycle and cheaper imports, or between meeting targets and maintaining margins, what actually drives purchasing decisions and how does this impact the viability of Europe's recycling infrastructure?

12:30pm-1:30pm *Lunch*

Solutions hub breakouts – Designing solutions: Upstream meets downstream

At Innovation Forum, we take a unique, participatory learning approach to our breakout sessions, ensuring that both our expert panels and attendees contribute to the discussion. Through diverse learning formats, we foster an environment where everyone has a voice.

The Solutions hubs are a space to both get best practice from leading organizations and share insights from your business reality. We'll set the tone with a 25 min introductory panel, followed by an expert group discussion for deeper engagement. Each Solution hub block consists of 3 x concurrent sessions:

- Track **A** – Technical challenges
- Track **B** – Operations and supply chain collaboration
- Track **C** – Strategic compliance and competitive advantage

1:30pm-2:30pm **Solutions hub 1**

- a. **Food contact packaging, beyond barriers: How new technologies balance sustainability and performance**
- b. **Internal alignment: Cross-functional approaches to advance both sustainability and business goals**
- c. **The consumer is king: How packaging storytelling transforms sustainability into premium experiences**

2:30pm-3:30pm **Solution hub 2**

- a. **How adhesive choices shape circularity outcomes: Design thinking for solutions that stick**
- b. **When competitors become co-creators: Brand excellence and collective breakthrough through R&D partnerships**
- c. **Supply chain engagement as competitive edge: Collecting, providing and reporting data effectively**

3:30pm-4:00pm *Afternoon break*

4:00pm-5:00pm **Solutions hub 3**

- a. **From waste stream to resource flow: Technologies to unlock hidden material value**
- b. **Industry transformation and new waste economies: How to ensure a just transition for workers**
- c. **Understanding EPR fees: Sourcing choices that save money and maximise sustainability impact**

5:00pm-6:00pm *Networking drinks*

Day 2, March 11th One step ahead: understanding and shaping industry transitions

9.00am-9.30am Towards a circular economy? What the EU Circular Economy Act means for industrial transformation, and what business can do to stay ahead

Set for adoption in 2026, the EU Circular Economy Act aims to establish a Single Market for secondary raw materials, accelerate circularity, and position Europe as the global leader on the circular economy by 2030. Building on recommendations from the Letta and Draghi reports, this legislation connects to the broader Competitiveness Compass and Clean Industrial Deal while aligning with recently adopted frameworks including the PPWR and Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation.

This session brings together regulatory experts and industry leaders for a two-way dialogue on how companies can proactively shape, and prepare for, this evolving framework without becoming overwhelmed by compliance demands.

- **Framing the debate:** Key points to note within the Act, from civil society perspectives to industry concerns
- **Clarity and harmonisation:** How will the Circular Economy Act integrate with the PPWR, Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation, and Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) schemes to create a coherent regulatory landscape?
- **Preparing proactively:** How businesses can engage meaningfully in the Act's development now and position themselves ahead of its 2026 adoption

9:30am-10:10am Voluntary targets, legal obligations and ROI: What does it take to move from good intention to effective implementation?

Ambitious but well-designed sustainability strategies designed can help companies adapt to supply chain and geopolitical volatility, AI integration, circularity, and climate adaptation. Yet, as regulatory frameworks tighten and shift, and market realities differ, a critical gap persists between ambition and effective action.

This session explores how companies can move beyond statements of intent to generate tangible returns on investment from sustainability.

- **Compliance as floor, not ceiling:** Are companies treating regulatory requirements as the endpoint, or as a springboard for more ambitious sustainability strategy that delivers competitive differentiation and socioeconomic value?
- **Evolving accountability structures:** Is packaging sustainability still primarily the domain of dedicated sustainability teams, or is ownership shared across procurement, regulatory, operations, R&D, and executive leadership?
- **Voluntary frameworks in a regulated world:** As mandatory targets proliferate, a look at what happens to existing voluntary commitments and industry-led schemes. Will they complement, compete with, or be absorbed by regulatory requirements?

10.10am-10.40am *Networking break*

11.00am-11.30am **Reuse at retail scale: Consumer-friendly strategies for interoperable reuse systems**

There are concrete efforts to move reuse systems from pilot programs to operational reality, but the economics remain challenging. Real-world implementations reveal critical questions: can return rates offset losses from unreturned packaging? Do washing and logistics costs outweigh single-use alternatives? How do retailers fit reuse infrastructure into smaller store formats?

This session brings together key actors, from grocery retail to restaurants, to share practical lessons learned across product categories and geographies.

- **The economics of reuse at scale:** How do logistics, materials and infrastructure costs compare to single-use alternatives? What return rates, loss management strategies, and operational efficiencies are necessary to make reuse systems economically viable?
- **In-store experience and consumer behaviour:** How are retailers and restaurants adapting reuse infrastructure to changing consumer shopping patterns? What design choices maximize customer participation?
- **Cross-category lessons:** Practical insights from across product categories about what drives success or failure in the real-world

11.30-12.15pm **Waste management and climate action: solutions across net zero and zero waste**

The waste management sector sits at the intersection of two urgent policy agendas: achieving net-zero emissions and building a circular economy. Decisions about waste treatment infrastructure, material recovery systems, and end-of-life pathways carry implications for both carbon and resource efficiency. But often, the two conflict.

With European packaging waste on track to increase CO2 emissions by 40 million tonnes annually by 2050 under current systems (Systemiq, 2025), this session examines how waste management strategies can simultaneously advance both climate and circularity goals. We'll touch upon topics like carbon accounting methodologies, treatment technology trade-offs, and the industrial transformation required to align zero waste ambition with decarbonization targets without sacrificing jobs or competitiveness.

- **Reconciling climate and circularity:** Are net-zero and zero waste goals inherently in tension, or can waste management strategies be designed to deliver on both? What does carbon accounting reveal about the true lifecycle impacts of different treatment pathways?
- **Infrastructure and investment priorities:** Where should Europe direct capital investment in waste management—mechanical recycling, chemical recycling, energy recovery with carbon capture, or alternative treatment technologies—to optimize for both emissions reduction and resource recovery?
- **Just transition in waste systems:** How can the waste management sector transform to meet climate and circularity targets while protecting existing workforces and creating quality jobs

12:15pm-1:15pm *Lunch*

1.15pm-2.00pm **Innovators' spotlight: Packaging systems for the future**

Breakthrough packaging solutions are emerging at the intersection of nature-inspired design, systems thinking, and technological innovation. From natural polymers that degrade harmlessly to digital platforms enabling shared packaging infrastructure, innovators are challenging conventional approaches with a glimpse of what circular systems can look like.

This interactive session brings diverse solutions to the stage: from material innovation to clean tech, and technologies that connect products across value chains, innovators will share what's been proven possible. Together with the audience and a panel of industry experts, we'll then explore the critical transition from validated pilot to mainstream adoption, discussing how collaboration between startups and established players can unlock scale for needed solutions.

- **From breakthrough to business case:** How are innovators balancing performance requirements, cost pressures, and regulatory compliance while maintaining sustainability integrity? And what compromises are necessary vs non-negotiable?
- **Designing for systems, not just substitution:** Beyond replacing materials, how innovations can enable broader infrastructure shifts, from packaging that integrates across product categories to platforms that facilitate shared use and recovery systems
- **Bridging the scale-up gap:** What specific barriers prevent promising solutions from reaching commercial scale, and what roles can incumbents, investors, and policymakers play in accelerating adoption through partnerships and enabling infrastructure?

2.00pm-3:30 **Roundtables**

These roundtable discussions are focused workshops where industry leaders come together to pool expertise and craft practical solutions. The sessions aim to drive innovation and collaborative problem-solving within the packaging sector, addressing a range of sustainability challenges through cross-industry expert dialogue. We'll run 2 x 45-min rounds of each session.

Roundtable A – **Markets for secondary materials: What are the bottlenecks in PCR uptake?**

Roundtable B – **Future-proofing your portfolio: Investment strategies for a circular economy**

Roundtable C – **The ROI of resilience: Quantifying sustainability's business impact**

Roundtable D – **'Is that toxic?': Addressing concerns for health and safety**

Roundtable E – **Shipping smart: How operational design for logistics and e-commerce reduces waste and costs**

Roundtable F – **EU digital product passport: Navigating transparency, traceability and data accessibility**

Roundtable G – **Beyond material choices: Discussing sustainability concerns around inks and colorants**

Roundtable H – **Building new habits: Behavioural insights to make sustainable packaging work for consumers**

3:30-3:30 **What's next for packaging sustainability? Roundtables wrap-up and key takeaways**

****please note this agenda is subject to amendments**