



3 July 2014

M&S, Sainsbury's and leading industry organisations launch in-market trial to significantly increase CPET tray recycling

A consortium of organisations from the UK's packaging, retail and recycling industries, led by Marks & Spencer and Sainsbury's, are to launch an in-market trial programme aimed at significantly increasing the number of black CPET trays that are recycled.

Approximately 1.3 billion black CPET trays are used in ready meal packaging in the UK every year. Whilst they are recyclable, the trays have proven difficult for the UK recycling industry to process as the black colour of the tray is not detectable with Near Infra Red (NIR) optical sorting equipment at plastic sorting facilities. As a result, they are usually missed and end up in landfill or being processed into energy.

Resource efficiency experts **WRAP** has worked with industry experts (coordinated by Nextek) to identify a new type of black CPET tray, using alternative colourant, which [sorting trials](#) have shown to be able to be detected and separated for recycling.

The project team consists of: WRAP, M&S, Sainsbury's, Faerch Plast, the Kent Resource Partnership, Biffa Waste Management, Recoup (RECYcling Of Used Plastics Limited), and Nextek Limited.

The project team will now seek to prove the effectiveness of these new trays through an in-market trial, commencing mid July, by demonstrating the ability to manufacture, distribute and recover them through household recycling collections at plastics sorting facilities. The trays will then be reprocessed using proven decontamination technologies for assessment of the ability to manufacture them back into food grade black CPET trays, aimed at achieving a closed loop system.

A public report will be available once the trial is completed and a full review has been carried out. This will examine sorting efficiency, carbon footprint reduction, disposal cost reduction and commercial viability.

The in-market trial - further information

Faerch Plast has manufactured approximately 2 million detectable CPET trays which will be used by **M&S** and **Sainsbury's** across their ready meals range. These meals will be sold in the UK over a 4 week period, with a high density in the South East of England, where the recovery of the trays is planned to take place.

Biffa will take a lead in using NIR detection technology reprogrammed to sort the detectable black CPET trays. Guidance for reprocessors wanting to make this change on their systems is available on the [WRAP website](#).

Nextek will assist with the automatic sorting and supervise the recycling and decontamination of the material back to Faerch Plast for assessment of the ability to manufacture them back into black CPET trays.

Commenting on the trial, Andrew Speck, M&S's Commercial and Environmental Packaging Manager said: "Around 1.3 billion CPET trays are used in the UK every year and, whilst they offer great convenience for consumers, the recycling challenge results in unnecessary waste and technically recyclable material being missed. At M&S, we recognise that we have a very important role to play in resolving this, both by ensuring that we use packaging that is easy for our customers to recycle and by working across industries to find a viable solution.

This trial highlights what can be achieved when all the relevant companies and bodies work together – all of us on the project team anticipate this will lead to a significant step forward for plastic recycling and progress for closed loop systems. We look forward to sharing the findings of the trial in the near future."

Debbie Parry, Sainsbury's Own Brand Packaging Technologist also commented: "This is a fantastic opportunity to be involved in a project which will not only potentially make our customers lives easier every day, contributing to our 20x20 sustainability goal of putting waste to positive use but also increase the recyclability of our current ready meal trays . It is a great example of the Sainsbury's value of trusting each other working together, when industry leaders collaborate closely together to achieve a shared goal."

Cllr Paul Barrington-King, Chair of the Kent Resource Partnership said: "This important partnership project between public and private sector organisations could mean all Materials Recycling Facility operators install updated NIR technology so that the recycling of CPET trays becomes standard practice. That has to be good news for councils when it comes to MRF contract specifications and value for money to taxpayers."

Cllr David Brazier, Vice-Chair of the KRP and Cabinet Member at Kent County Council said: "Proving the technical viability of recycling black trays enables councils to give clearer messages to the public on which pots tubs and trays can be recycled. Proving financial viability allows the value chain, including councils to avoid disposal costs as well as securing an income stream'.

"This represents a world first on several levels in the recovery of black plastic CPET trays from the post-consumer stream" said Edward Kosior, Managing Director of Nextek Limited. "The trial represents the logical extension of over 4 years of technical investigations sponsored by WRAP to fine tune the development of these special colourants so that they function without any negative impacts on the manufacturing and recovery of these widely used plastic trays. The technology has the potential to be shared with other packaging and durable applications such as appliances, office equipment and automotive components and could mark the beginning of a new capacity to capture black plastic products at high speeds in the modern MRFs used throughout Europe".

Steve Morgan, Technical Manager at Recoup, adds: "This demonstrates the vision and commitment of two major retailers to provide a solution for a common item which is often asked to be excluded from recycling collections. Demonstrating the opportunity will not only enable the trays to be recovered at Material Recovery Facilities and increase recycling rates, but create a potentially technically and commercially viable and sustainable end market."

Claire Shrewsbury, WRAP's Packaging Programme Area Manager commented: "WRAP welcomes the opportunity to trial the use of detectable black colourants in the M&S and Sainsbury's product range to validate its true potential in-market. After four years of development work to improve the detectability and recycling of black packaging, it is great to see cross-sector engagement that allows us to trial its effectiveness in the real world. WRAP looks forward to the trial and its results, and considers this a great step toward enabling closed loop recycling."

For further information:

Emily Dimmock, Marks & Spencer Press Office, 0208 718 1223

Sainsbury's Press Office, 0207 695 7295 press_office@sainsburys.co.uk

Notes to editors

Project team

- **WRAP**

WRAP's vision is a world where resources are used sustainably. It works in partnership to help businesses, individuals and communities improve resource efficiency.

Established as a not-for-profit company in 2000, WRAP is backed by government funding from England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales.

- **M&S**

Since the launch of Plan A, M&S's eco and ethical programme that aims to make it the world's most sustainable major retailer by 2015, M&S has led the way in the use of recycled plastics in its packaging and carried out extensive work to increase the levels of plastic packaging recycled by UK households. M&S has acted as the lead company and chair of the project, and the detectable CPET trays will be used for its ready meals and sold in a number of its stores in the South East.

- **Sainsbury's**

Since the launch of our 20x20 sustainability targets in 2011, we continue to make significant progress against our sustainability commitments. We have Achieved Zero Waste to Landfill, having achieved zero food waste in 2010 as well as installing our 100th comprehensive recycling facility, with 200 more planned. This project will contribute further to our plans. The CPET trays will be used for a range of ready meals sold in stores in the South East of England.

- **Faerch Plast**

Since its inception in 1969, Faerch Plast has become a leading manufacturer of plastic packaging for direct food contact. The company is a supplier to the leading stakeholders in the European food industry who specialise in ready meals, fresh meat, cold food and snacks. It offers a wide range of containers and trays made in PS, CPET, APET, PP, MAPET® and AMPET®.

- **Kent Resource Partnership**

KRP is a partnership of the 13 Kent councils with responsibilities for the collection and disposal of waste. The KRP has policies to work collaboratively with the supply chain in support of achieving higher quantities and quality of recyclates and deliver value for money to taxpayers. The 13 councils are Ashford BC; Canterbury City Council; Dartford BC; Dover DC; Gravesham BC; Kent County Council; Maidstone BC; Sevenoaks DC; Shepway DC; Swale BC; Thanet DC; Tonbridge & Malling BC; and Tunbridge Wells BC.

- ***Biffa Waste Management***

Biffa is the leading nationwide integrated waste management business providing collection, treatment, recycling and technologically-driven energy generation services, and will provide waste collection services for the trial.

- ***Recoup (RECYCLING OF USED PLASTICS LIMITED)***

With its substantial experience in collating information based upon the collection, handling, reprocessing and end markets of plastic fractions within the UK, Recoup has lent its skills to project manage the trial.

- ***Nextek Limited***

Nextek is well known for its expertise in plastics recycling and for the development of the "NIR detectable black" colorants as well as having expertise in defining plastics for food contact applications. Nextek will manage many of the technical aspects of the recovery and recycling of the plastics into a clean state so that new trays can be manufactured.