

General Notice

Recyclability of packaging that has contained solid or liquid food products

PRELIMINARY REMARKS

This general notice follows on from the study conducted by the CTP (Pulp and Paper Research & Technical Centre) within the standards-based framework banning the recycling of paper and cardboard sorted as general waste. Currently virtually all paper/cardboard household packaging is considered recyclable provided that the resulting used household packaging items are “clean and dry”. With a view to defining the concept of “clean and dry” more precisely, the study sought to determine limits of acceptability for packaging that contained food. At present there are two types of food products on the market: dry products (rice, pasta, cereals, etc.) and greasy or moist products such as pizza, yoghurt and frozen food.

By definition “dry” foods do not leave residues on packaging. On the other hand, the second category can soil the related packaging superficially, which is why this type of packaging was assessed. Our assessment of the effect of food residues on the quality of recycled pulp produced from the collection and recycling of soiled packaging consisted of an analysis of the impact of residues from greasy, sweet, savoury and moist products in the laminated and non-laminated paper/cardboard categories provided the packaging is emptied (free from all food waste) beforehand. The study was based on experiment conditions that were *particularly unfavourable* and hence *unrealistic* to assess the worst case impact of food waste on the quality of recycled pulp.

GENERAL OPINION OF CEREC

Under current collection, sorting and regeneration conditions:

- CEREC has issued a favourable opinion regarding the recycling of household packaging waste that has been in contact with greasy, sweet, savoury and moist products in the laminated and non-laminated paper/cardboard categories provided it is emptied (free from all food waste) beforehand. Packaging containing food waste (in the form of pieces) may not be integrated into a recycling process. On the other hand, the presence of mere traces does not lower the quality of recycled pulp substantially, and in this case it may be reintegrated into new applications. In addition, at the current market penetration rate, the tonnage of soiled waste and quantities of food residues contained in this packaging is not sufficient enough to negatively impact the paper/cardboard packaging recycling line.

- Against this backdrop, CEREC recommends implementation of a new sorting instruction to the consumer that paper/cardboard household packaging that has been in contact with food must go in the separate collection bin provided it has been properly emptied and does not contain food waste.

APPROVAL



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