

## **Focus on fully recyclable food packaging - Pöppelmann FAMAC® relies on sustainability initiative PÖPPELMANN blue® and powerful partnerships**

The European Commission's European Strategy for Plastics in a Circular Economy, adopted in January 2018, aims to lay the foundation for a new and sustainable plastics economy. After all, according to the Commission, Europeans generate 25 million tonnes of plastic waste every year. In view of climate change, pollution, population growth and resource dependence, environmental and climate protection have become a global challenge. One goal of the European strategy is to reuse or cost-effectively recycle all plastic packaging in the EU by 2030. Stakeholders along the plastics value chain are thus called upon to lead the way by changing design and manufacturing and improving recycling. The aspect of sustainability in relation to packaging is also having an increasing impact on consumers' purchasing decisions. It is therefore worthwhile to set the course as quickly as possible in the direction of a sustainable circular economy and to take advantage of the opportunities to bring economy and ecology into harmony.

One company that has launched a broad-based initiative in this field is Pöppelmann GmbH & Co. KG from Lohne in Lower Saxony. It is one of the leading manufacturers in the plastics processing industry. With more than 2,000 employees, five locations and four different business segments, the Pöppelmann Group supplies very different industries in over 90 countries with its products - from the food industry to commercial horticulture, mechanical and apparatus engineering, the automotive, pharmaceutical and cosmetics industries to medical technology.

The use of recycled materials is an important part of the company's sustainability strategy: Pöppelmann has been using recycled materials in its various business units for around 20 years. These are mainly post-industrial recyclates, i.e. production waste from other production processes. In the Pöppelmann TEKU® division, the company's horticultural division, the proportion of recyclates for the various plant pots is already more than 80 percent. Pöppelmann K-TECH®, the company's automotive division, also already uses recycled materials in its technical products.

### **PÖPPELMANN blue® initiative for more sustainability**

Now the Pöppelmann Group is going one step further: as part of its PÖPPELMANN blue® initiative, it is bundling all activities throughout the company that are intended to promote a consistent recycling economy. Matthias Lesch, Managing Director at Pöppelmann, explains: "As one of the leading companies in plastics processing, we see ourselves as having a great responsibility to make our processes and products as environmentally compatible as possible - throughout the entire life cycle, from development to use and recycling. Meeting this responsibility with solutions that also have to meet the needs of our customers and be economical is the great challenge for us and our industry."

With PÖPPELMANN blue®, the group strives, where possible, for a closed material cycle in which the plastic used comes from one and the same stage of the value chain. This means that 100 percent recycled material is used, which must be 100 percent recyclable again afterwards. The biggest challenge here is to maintain the physical properties of the different plastics during recycling. Clean separation and professional processing are important to produce a truly equivalent secondary plastic. "In some sectors, such as the automotive industry, there was considerable resistance to the use of recyclates for a long time. In the meantime, the technical possibilities for clean material separation and reprocessing are so good that we can reduce reservations," explains Matthias Lesch.

### **"Design for Recycling" helps determine product development**

To ensure that the recyclability of a product is taken into account as early as the design stage, the topic of "Design for Recycling", which has become increasingly important throughout the packaging industry, has long been a high priority at Pöppelmann. In its product development, the group of companies incorporates aspects that positively influence the recyclability of plastic packaging. These include, among other things, a bright colouring to reliably filter out the products in the

recycling companies' plants, the use of monomaterials that are easier to recycle, the use of optimised label and closure solutions, and the separability of all components in the recycling process.

In the non-food sector, successful pilot projects by the Pöppelmann Group show that the closed material cycle can indeed be realised. For example, the Pöppelmann TEKU® division recently presented plant pots made of Pöppelmann PCR, a post-consumer recycled plastic that is 100 percent recycled material from DSD collections. The Pöppelmann KAPSTO® division will also be manufacturing its plastic protective elements for industrial customers from post-consumer materials in the future. After use, these stoppers and caps are collected from the users, returned to Pöppelmann for recycling and fully recycled.

### **Focus on recyclability for food packaging**

The experts at Pöppelmann FAMAC® are also convinced that a closed material cycle is feasible from a technical point of view, because many food packaging materials are already highly recyclable today. Materials such as pure polypropylene (PP) can already be recycled and cleaned according to type. In the case of plastic packaging for food, however, the regulatory requirements that apply to food must also be met. "This is the big challenge, because there are currently no certified recycling processes for food packaging," says Marco von Döllen, Sales Manager Pöppelmann FAMAC®.

This is why Pöppelmann FAMAC® conducts intensive research for continuous further development in this area and relies on close partnerships, e.g. with food manufacturers and retailers, research institutions such as the cyclos-HTP Institute for Recyclability and Product Responsibility, as well as other recycling experts such as Der Grüne Punkt - Duales System Deutschland GmbH (DSD). Matthias Lesch explains: "In the development of new sustainable technologies and materials, we rely on finding solutions as a team. That's why we are always open to a close exchange and new partnerships with other companies that are also committed to more sustainability in the field of plastic packaging."

However, the packaging specialist also reminds us that in the whole discussion about improved recycling, it is important to keep a holistic view of plastic packaging. "These cannot be replaced by other materials in certain cases so far. With their various protective functions, e.g. against the spoilage of food or pharmaceutical products, they themselves contribute to reducing the waste of resources. But we must see to it that we close the loop and design packaging in such a way that it provides maximum product protection and is sustainable at the same time. The declared goal is that packaging ends up in the yellow bag and also becomes packaging again after the recycling process," says Marco von Döllen.

Pöppelmann is a member of the IK Industrievereinigung Kunststoffverpackungen e.V., which in turn is involved in the SAVE FOOD initiative. SAVE FOOD has calculated that about one third of all food is wasted or lost. Together with its members from politics, industry and society, the initiative aims to drive innovation, promote interdisciplinary dialogue and initiate debates to find solutions on a broad scale. A small part of this is to develop smart and sustainable packaging solutions that tackle the general 'throwaway mentality' and increase respect for food. And plastic packaging, with its multiple product protections, can contribute significantly to this.

"A recycling-friendly packaging solution is sustainability in its purest form. Intensive work on this topic holds a great opportunity for European industry, and the plastics sector in particular, to become a global leader in new technologies and materials. With the company-wide PÖPPELMANN blue® initiative, we are taking up this challenge," Marco von Döllen concludes.

### **About Pöppelmann**

Pöppelmann GmbH & Co. KG from Lohne in Lower Saxony is one of the leading manufacturers in the plastics processing industry. With over 2,000 employees worldwide, the company produces standard and customised plastic products at five locations.

### **About the Green Dot Group**

As a service provider for extended producer responsibility, as a leading secondary raw material supplier for plastics and as a premium producer of plastic recyclates, the companies of Der Grüne Punkt are the solution provider for the needs of the circular economy. Der Grüne Punkt - Duales System Deutschland GmbH (DSD) is the market leader of dual systems in Germany and stands for intelligent take-back systems as well as the development and marketing of innovative recyclates and services. Systec Plastics produces premium recyclates of the Systalen brand for the international market at its sites in Eisfeld and Hörstel. The companies are combined in DSD - Duales System Holding GmbH & Co. KG.

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