NFFOODS Spectrum
perspectives on food technologies & business
ASIA

EU adopts sustainable packaging regulations to reduce waste

19 December 2024 | News

The regulation addresses the entire lifecycle of packaging



The regulation addresses the entire lifecycle of packaging

The European Council has officially adopted new regulations concerning packaging and packaging waste. These regulations aim to significantly reduce the generation of packaging waste by establishing binding reuse targets, restricting certain types of single-use packaging, and requiring economic operators to minimise the amount of packaging they use. The regulation addresses the entire lifecycle of packaging.

The new rules include several key requirements for packaging:

- By 2030 and 2040, there will be targets for minimum percentages of recycled content, reaching up to 65 per cent for single-use plastic bottles by 2040.

- Packaging must be minimised in weight and volume, avoiding unnecessary materials.

- Substances of concern, such as per- and polyfluorinated alkyl substances (PFAS), will be restricted in food contact packaging if they exceed specified thresholds.

- Labelling, marking, and information requirements will help consumers sort and choose packaging based on material composition or recycled content.

Additionally, the regulations impose restrictions on single-use plastic packaging for:

- Pre-packed fruits and vegetables weighing less than 1.5 kg.

- Food and beverages consumed within hotels, bars, and restaurants.

- Individual portions of condiments, sauces, milk creamer, and sugar are served in hotels, bars, and restaurants.

- Small, single-use cosmetic and toiletry products (e.g., shampoo or body lotion bottles) are used in accommodations.

- Very lightweight plastic bags, such as those provided at markets for bulk groceries.

The regulation establishes binding reuse targets for 2030 and indicative targets for 2040, varying by the type of packaging used by operators (e.g., binding targets of 40 per cent for transport and sales packaging and 10 per cent for grouped packaging).

Take-away businesses will now be required to allow customers to bring their own containers to fill with cold or hot beverages or ready-prepared food without any additional charge.

The Council's formal adoption concludes the ordinary legislative procedure. The regulation will soon be published in the EU's Official Journal and will come into effect 18 months after its publication.