



EEB
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Food packaging: waste or resource?

ECESP Circular Talk –
6th September 2023

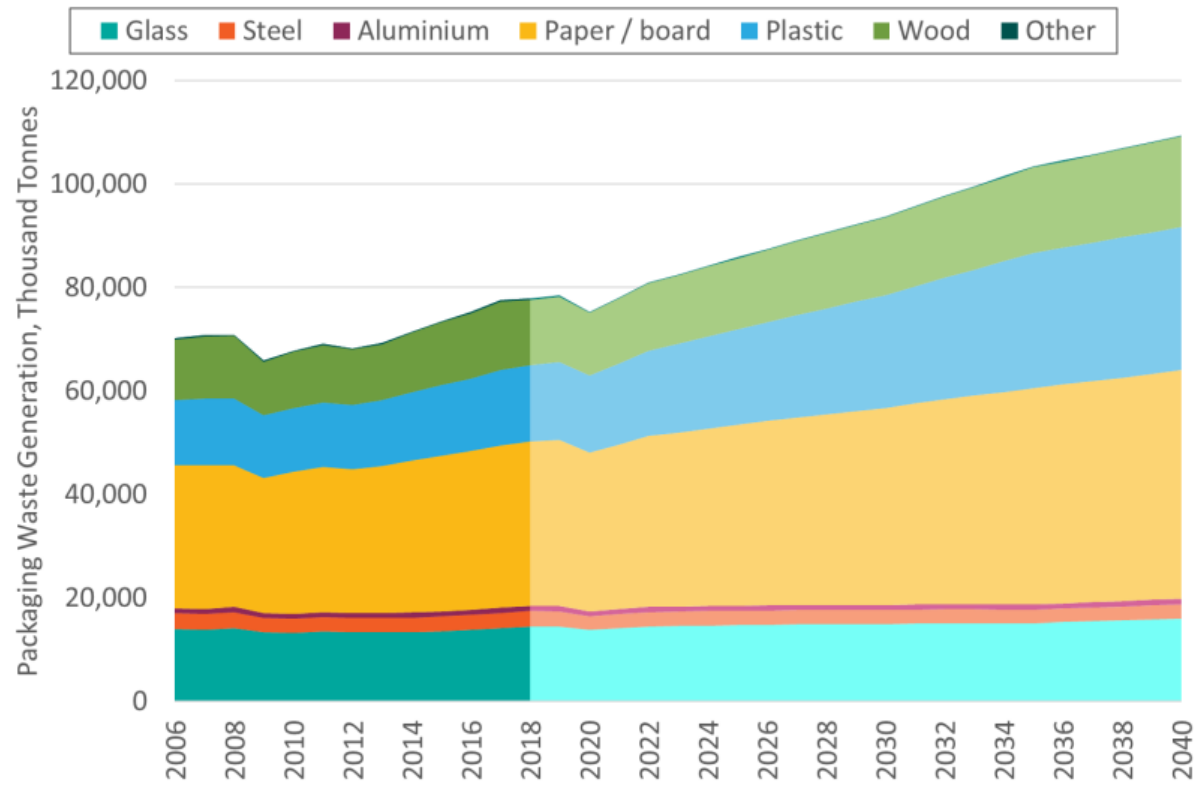


Food packaging sustainability challenges

- Rapid **growth of on-the-go** and ready to eat segment – specific challenges for packaging design, driving demand for plastic and paper-based
- **Recycled content remains limited** in paper-based and plastic food contact
- Paper-based generally combined with chemical additives or plastics
- **Widespread presence of substances of concern** in food packaging (e.g. PFAS and CMRs in take-away)
- Recycling and **effective sorting in on-the-go settings remains limited**, high costs of littering incurred by public authorities
- **Limited development of reuse systems** or credible solutions to sustainability challenges

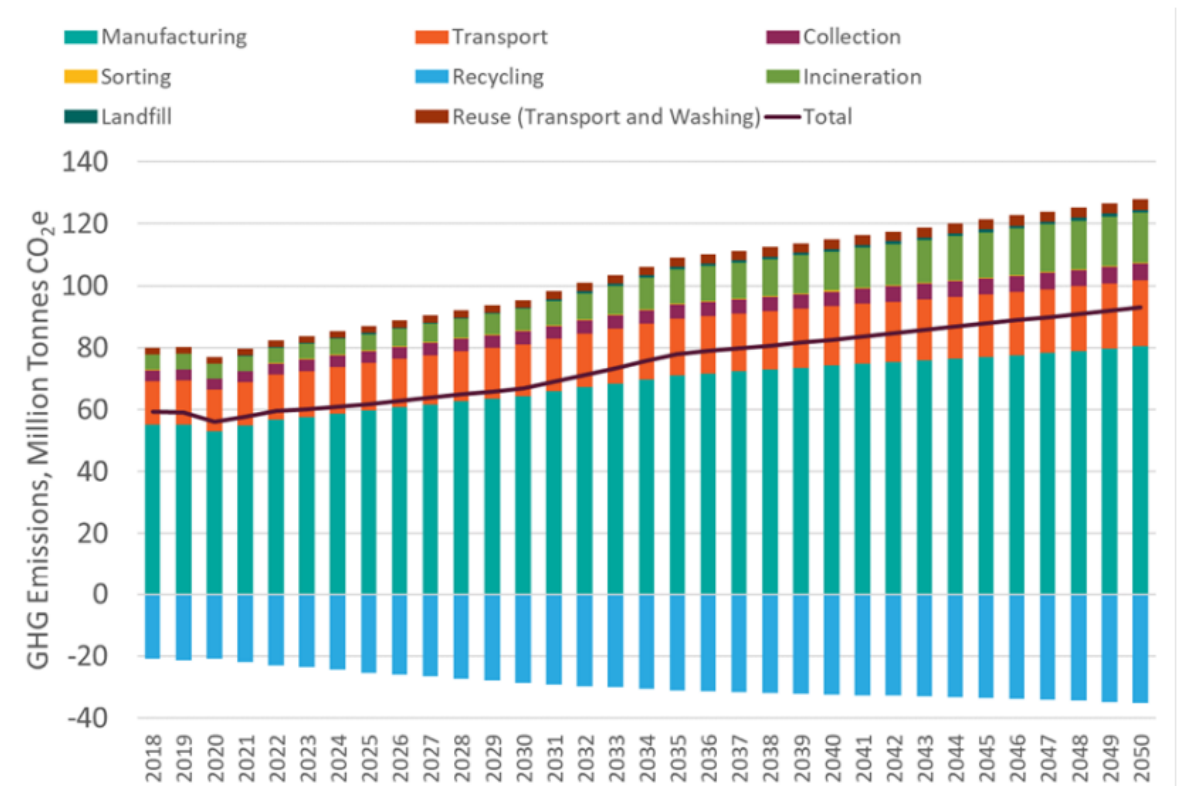
Risk of material substitution – paper straws 2.0

Figure 5-2 Generation of Packaging Waste, Thousand Tonnes



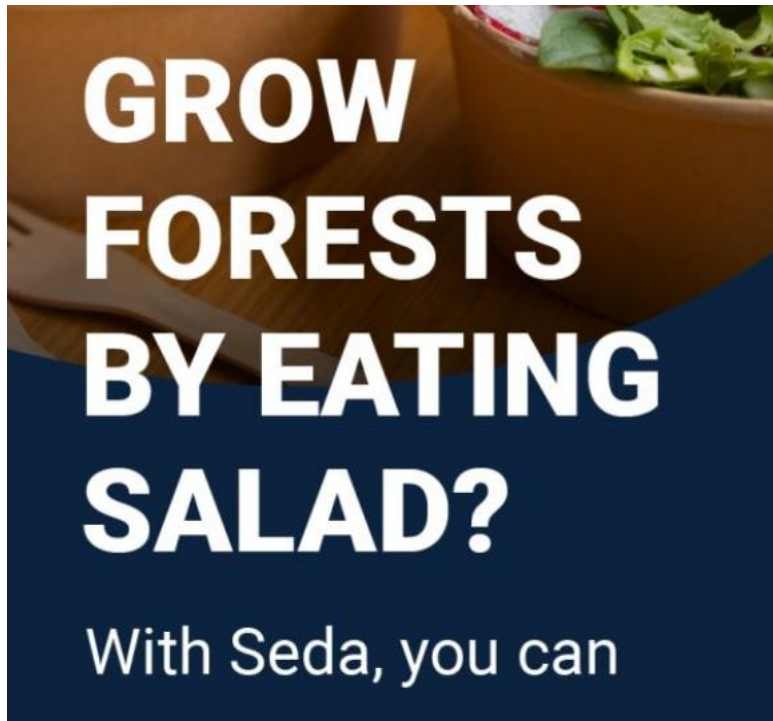
The overall tonnage of waste by packaging type in the latest year of historic data (2018) is shown in Figure 5-3 (next page).

Figure 9 GHG emissions million tonnes CO₂e (Source: Eunomia baseline report)





Misleading campaigns in the sector



*Paper-based packaging
good for the forests?*



*Reusable packaging
surrounded by rats?*



*McDonalds helping our
children to read?*



PPWR recommendations for food

- Maintain an **ambitious waste prevention targets** to reverse the trend of growing levels of packaging waste and associated impacts (including 2018 baseline)
- Define **credible reuse targets across relevant food and beverage segments** – including food retail, dine-in and take-away for the HORECA sector
- Develop **robust minimum requirements for reuse systems** to ensure they deliver environmental performance
- Address the **gap in food contact legislation to address substances of concern** in food packaging including PFAS and other problematic substances food in paper-based packaging in particular
- Address **packaging led drivers of food waste**, such as multi-packs
- Maintain the role of secondary legislation to **define design for recycling requirements** for major packaging groups
- Ensure **EPR systems support circularity** by supporting recyclability, waste prevention and covering the costs of littered (food) packaging

Relevant resources on food packaging

Unveiling the Complexities: Exploring LCAs of Reusable Packaging in the Take-Away Sector

Why do they disagree and how can we determine their credibility?

July 2023

eunomia

ZERO WASTE EUROPE

reloop

REGULATIONS REPORT RESULTS FOOD



Zero Waste Europe Factsheet

Debunking common myths about food hygiene, food waste, and health concerns related to reusable packaging

When it comes to packaging for food and beverages, misconceptions about its relation to food hygiene and food waste have been spread by the interested industry for some time. Those concerns were the current debate on the revision of the Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR), aims to bust some of the most common myths.

MYTH #1: SINGLE-USE PACKAGING REDUCES FOOD WASTE

Packaging producers have repeatedly claimed that single-use packaging, small portion size, and making refrigeration unnecessary, a recent UNEP study found that: **'Wherever the food type is sold unpackaged or in reusable packaging, as this is almost always environmentally preferable to single-use packaging.'** The authors recommend using packaging mainly to preserve fresh food. Packaging improves the overall environmental footprint by protecting the food, reusable packaging is preferable to single-use.

In EU households, food waste and plastic packaging waste have increased simultaneously over the past two decades (Figure 1). The additional packaging has so far failed to reduce household food waste since some consumer behaviour resulting in food waste such as over-purchasing, preparation, and storage of food are independent from packaging design. In some cases, packaging can actually increase food waste during processing; practices such as trimming, multipacks and portion size can generate additional food waste during production.

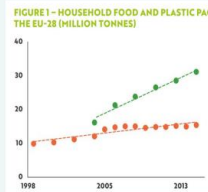


Figure 1 - Household food and plastic packaging waste in the EU-28 (million tonnes)

zerowasteurope.eu
Debunking common myths about food hygiene, food waste, and health concerns related to reusable packaging

Assessing Climate Impact: Reusable Systems vs. Single-use Takeaway Packaging

September 2023

eunomia



Fact sheet: Reusable Take-away Packaging

7 reasons why reusable take-away packaging is a sustainable alternative for climate protection and resource conservation

- 1 Reusable take-away packaging is more climate-friendly than single-use packaging.
- 2 The cleaning of reusable take-away packaging uses less water than the production of single-use packaging.
- 3 Reusable take-away packaging gets recycled whereas the most common disposal scenario of single-use take-away packaging is incineration.
- 4 Support of bring-your-own packaging will not be sufficient to create a transition towards a circular packaging sector.
- 5 Safe refilling of reusable packaging is possible in compliance with hygiene standards.
- 6 Paper packaging exerts pressure on forests and is not always recyclable.
- 7 Best Practices for the entire EU: Existing legislation and well-established reuse systems already in place in progressive Member States



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Thanks you!

Keep in touch

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