



Suresnes le 28 septembre 2018

## Pledging campaign for the uptake of recycled plastics

### ***Introduction***

Founded over 150 years ago in the Jura mountains in eastern France, the Bel Group is an international family-owned business comprising over 30 international and local brands, including The Laughing Cow®, Mini Babybel®, Kiri®, Leerdammer® and Boursin®. Bel's drive for sustainable growth guides its strategic decision-making: The "We care in every portion" program establishes clear and specific targets to ensure Bel can offer a range of products that is increasingly responsible and even more respectful of people and the environment, across the world. Using a "positive innovation" approach, our vision is to become the **most innovative and responsible** player of healthier snacks and meals solutions. More information [www.groupe-bel.com](http://www.groupe-bel.com)

### ***Our pledge for recycled plastic:***

#### 1. Group sustainable and responsible packaging policy

For the around 18 billion dairy portions it sells yearly, the Bel Group uses a variety of packaging materials, of which around 75% is paper/cardboard, 15% is plastic, and 10% aluminum (by weight).

To be a part of the circular economy of packaging materials, the Bel Group committed in its Sustainable Packaging Policy to **move towards 100% of recyclable and/or biodegradable packaging by 2025**. The Group is also committed to increasing its use of recycled materials

These targets will mainly impact our **plastic packaging**. The Bel Group uses about 77.000 Tons of plastic for the packaging of its products per year. Some items will require a complete refit in order to become technically recyclable. However, so that our recyclable-ready packaging can truly become recycled packaging, recycling rules will need to be extended to all packaging in whole European countries and new recycling streams will need to be developed.

For our **paper/cardboard packaging**, we commit to prioritising the use of recycled paper/cardboard. If we need virgin paper/cardboard, we will use only certified sources.

For **aluminium**, we are already working with other stakeholders to develop the recycling of thin aluminium packaging, through the CELAA initiative in France and AREME initiative in Belgium.

For **aluminium**, we are also engaged as downstream supporter in the ASI (Aluminium Stewardship Initiative), who work on a more sustainable aluminium value chain. We are studying how to include ASI aluminium in our packaging as soon as possible.



2. Specific targets for inclusion of recycled plastics

i. Plastic concerned

In order to pursue its policy of including more recycled plastic in its plastic packaging, Bel Group decided to start with the packaging offering the best and quickest potential for results, namely our PET packaging.

We decided to replace the packaging for an existing product – Leerdammer cheese slices – with a new packaging integrating for the first time recycled PET. We are committing to thereafter increase the recycled content in this same packaging, and replace the packaging of another existing product.

ii. The pledge and its milestones

Our new recyclable packaging for Leerdammer launched in early 2018 in France and Germany contains 24% of r-PET (see below more detail on this new packaging in which the recycled part will be incorporated). This packaging will be rolled out to all production lines for the product by end 2020. The current scope of the project is:

Leerdammer slices pack 1st step by 2020	1180 tons of plastic required	24% of the total amount to be replaced by r-PET	283t of r-PET	<b>+283t vs previous pack</b>
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The second step will be to roll-out r-PET 24% in more products and increase the level of r-PET to 50% for products already containing r-PET 24%. This step will be done from 2020 to 2025 and will require verification of some technical aspects and above all identifying enough sourcing for r-PET on the market.

Leerdammer slices pack 2nd step by 2025	1424 tons of plastic required	24% r-PET 50% r-PET	27t r-PET 24% 656t r-PET 50% 683t total r-PET	<b>+400t vs step 2020</b>
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Capitalizing on the knowledge acquired with Leerdammer packaging, by 2025 we will also include r-PET in our Pik&Croq and Kiri Gouter packaging (snacks which mix Kiri fresh cheese with grissini “Kiri Gouter” and The Laughing Cow processed cheese with grissini, “P&C”)

P&C and Kiri Gouter Packaging By 2025	1.400 tons of plastic	24% of r-PET	336 of r-PET	<b>+336t vs previous pack</b>
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iii. Possible bottlenecks and enabling conditions

The key condition for our success is likely to be the availability of r-PET on the market. To increase the volume of r-PET available we need a better collection of PET packaging already included in sorting rules, and also an extension of recycling rules to include other PET packaging (not only bottles).



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For these items of packaging, technical and sourcing studies will be done to assess the potential for going further (80% of r-PET).

The enabling conditions are not present at this stage to extend our efforts to other types of plastic package. For example, recycled PP does not offer sufficient guarantees in terms of food safety – technical work and further specific regulation on purity and suitability for food packaging of PP would be needed. Similarly, we cannot guarantee the quality of recycled PE at this stage.

### 3. Bel Group's procurement rules on recycled plastic content (question 16 of the template)

From 2017, for each tender for plastic material, Bel asks the supplier to consider using recycled plastic and to propose a level of incorporation accessible for this packaging. The supplier selection process takes this parameter into account when we study the different offers.

#### ***The new LEERDAMMER recyclable packaging:***

Convinced of the need to develop recyclable packaging, Bel Group commenced an ambitious project in 2012 to transform its main plastic packaging into recyclable-ready packaging.

The project received support from Eco-Emballage in France (now named CITEO) and concerns our plastic tray with a rigid lid for Leerdammer slices.

This packaging alone represents about one third of all plastic used by Bel for its packaging.

After a complete renovation before 2010 to reduce the thickness of the plastic to the minimum, we performed a Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) in 2011 to identify the most appropriate way to reduce the impact of this packaging. As a result of this study we chose to modify this multi-material (PET/PE) packaging into a mono-material one (100% APET).

It took several years of complex R&D, in partnership with our suppliers, to define the right technical solution to ensure good recyclability, maintain product quality and safety (we have had to remove an oxygen barrier layer and adapt the modified atmosphere), satisfy consumer preferences (convenience, easy opening, printing quality) and ensure production line efficiency (we needed to modify the vision control mechanism on the production line).

The first recyclable-ready packaging was tested on small market in 2017 for consumer acceptance, then launched in Germany and France in 2018. The full roll-out of the new material will be completed by end-2020 and will require the modification of all our production lines and also the production lines of our co-packers.

We performed a recycling test in France and a new LCA on the final packaging to confirm the efficiency of our work.



**The results are encouraging. With the new packaging, we:**

- Allow 2200t tons of plastic to become recyclable-ready in Europe
- Reduce our use of plastic by 225 tons per year in Europe
- Will incorporate about 283 tons of r-PET in our packaging after the full roll-out (24%)
- Reduce the need of fossil energy by 13%
- Reduce the carbon footprint by 11%
- Reduce water footprint by 9%
- Will incorporate about 683 tons of r-PET in our packaging when will reach our 2025 target (technical and sourcing validation to be done)

**For more information on our communication to consumers regarding Leerdammer packaging:**

<https://www.ribambel.com/leerdammer/nos-engagements/le-respect-de-lenvironnement>

<https://leerdammer.de/wir/nachhaltigkeitsinitiative-von-leerdammer#umwelt>