Innovation beyond compliance:
The commercial case for sustainable packaging
Webinar, 9th June 2026 | Q&A Report

Below are the questions asked through the Zoom Q&A function. Some logistical comments or those containing personal information have been removed, spelling and grammar have been corrected, and panelists' live answers were summarized.

1. I would like to hear more from Olga on how she see recycled packaging vs virgin material packaging. Recycled demands more resources being produced (i.e. emissions and fresh water) compared to virgin, and it is also weaker, which usually leads to needing more materials to meet requirements and correct protection and performance. It [*bulkier packaging made with recycled materials*] will also take up more space during transportation, which will lead to decreased container utilization and a need for more containers being shipped across the globe, generating even more emissions. Last but not least, if all shifted to recycled materials in packaging, we will run out of supply in 6-8 months, as the stream is dependent on virgin being put into the loop. **Wouldn´t a more healthy and sober approach be to use the type of material that is fit for the purpose, limit the materials used, and go for light weight and strength over more material "just" in order to use recycled?**

Answered live by Olga Kachook, Sustainable Packaging Coalition director at GreenBlue Org:

> The question of recycled vs. virgin packaging is one that has somewhat fallen out of focus, as many companies' packaging decisions are now largely led by EPR fee structures and requirements. While life cycle analysis and environmental impact assessments have receded into the background as a result, a solid strategy also depends on the ability to keep an eye beyond fees and compliance and consider the broader implications of materials and formats across a portfolio. In some cases, the increased water use associated with recycling may outweigh that of virgin material production, but in others it probably does not – with the 'best approach' depending on what one's portfolio and supply chain looks like. Environmental impact assessment tools remain relevant and can be helpful in compliance efforts – in relation to eco-modulation criteria, and EPR fees and bonuses. For now, it's up to individual companies to figure out how to meaningfully incorporate impact assessments into their decision-making, treating them as an 'item on the checklist' when evaluating one packaging option against another.

2. For Amy (Lush). Do you ever speak about your packaging sustainability to your customers? Does it get valorized?

Response by Amy Merli, sustainability specialist at LUSH:

> Yes, we do speak with customers about the packaging, or lack of packaging. Naked packaging means we must convey the information that normally would be on the packaging. Our products must fit a need for the customer and the same with the packaging. One of the reasons we have very simple, minimal packaging is that we believe customers shouldn't be paying for the packaging but rather high quality products.

3. For Vanessa, how do you make the internal commercial case for sustainable packaging investment, especially when financial returns are long-term and diffuse? What metrics do you use?

Answered live by Vanessa Harrer, global impact business lead for ingredients and packaging at Mondelēz International:

> The strongest internal business case begins with packaging reduction, which simultaneously cuts waste and costs. This is an area where significant learnings have accumulated and that can be replicated across markets. For material shifts or recycled content, external consumer pressure is a valuable lever. Some brands have introduced 80% recycled content in the Nordics and UK, driven by consumer expectations, brand positioning, and the commercial value that flows from that. Cross-functional collaboration is also key: savings from quick wins (such as resizing gift boxes) can be reinvested in initiatives like recycled content integration. Globally, priority is given to business cases that are cost-neutral and leverage value through internal and supplier collaboration. Consumer and retail data can further support the case in certain geographies, showing again how the approach varies case-by-case across regions and product categories.

4. How are companies on the panel balancing fragmented eco-design criteria for packaging EPR, particularly in Europe? How do they optimize for different markets?

Answered live by Vanessa Harrer and Amy Merli:

> The widespread approach is to design for whichever region has the strictest criteria, ideally in synergy with the organisation's own sustainable packaging goals. In many cases these aligns naturally - for example, where a company is already moving toward 100% recycled content and non-virgin fibres. Where they don't, the challenge is navigating external regulatory criteria while remaining aligned with internal standards and goals. Local guidelines allow some flexibility for individual brands, but for integrated companies operating across geographies, it is the highest technical requirements that ultimately set the benchmark.

5. For Betul: as a packaging manufacturer, how does your sustainability strategy interact with or push back on what your brands and retailers are asking for?

Answered live by Dr. Betül Türel Erbay, chief sustainability and innovation officer at Korozo Group:

> Korozo are combining sustainability and innovation in their strategic approach, with packaging being central given its commercial relevance and regulatory commitments attached to it. Like their brand customers, Korozo is committed to recyclability and recycled content, in line with regulatory expectations. The approach is a two-way street: listening to customer needs while also proactively suggesting improvements to better meet compliance requirements, offering solutions and resources to help scale innovation and manage financial impacts of compliance. Support extends from design to rollout and implementation, with ongoing monitoring of collection and recycling sectors, engagement with regulators and customers, and investment in open innovation aimed at reducing emissions and waste.

6. What's your read on the US policy landscape for packaging regulation given current federal uncertainty?

Answered live by Olga Kachook:

State-level legislation is expected to continue setting the agenda for companies, with a national EPR scheme unlikely in the near term. Some supporting federal legislation remains possible, but the primary drivers of corporate focus are state laws - particularly California's regulatory framework, recycled content mandates across multiple states, and the EPR programs already up and running in Oregon and Colorado. For most companies, navigating these existing state frameworks is the core focus, and doing so serves as useful preparation in case future country-wide programs concretize.