

FRANCESCA ANGIULLI, SASCHA NISSEN
A.I.S.E. - International Association for Soaps, Detergents and Maintenance Products, Brussels, Belgium

Developments on packaging within the detergents industry sector and the EU plastics strategy

KEYWORDS: Packaging, industry voluntary initiative, design, recyclability, circular economy, sustainable detergents.

ABSTRACT

A.I.S.E., the International Association for Soaps, Detergents and Maintenance Products, has a long tradition of proactive work towards sustainable development. In the global perspective, this industry sector is positively contributing to the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) via its industry tailored strategy on sustainable development. This includes initiatives aimed at creating a circular economy and reducing the environmental footprint of detergents and maintenance products, where all the phases of a product life cycle are considered. Therefore, continuous improvement in the efficiency of the product design, but also of its packaging have to be sought. Embracing the circular economy and the EU plastics strategy, A.I.S.E. has embarked on a series of actions and collaborations, which are described in detail in this article.

A ROLE MODEL INDUSTRY FOR SERVING SOCIETY IN AN INNOVATIVE AND SUSTAINABLE WAY

A.I.S.E., the International Association for Soaps, Detergents and Maintenance Products, is the official representative body of this industry in Europe. Its membership totals 29 national associations across Europe, 17 corporate members and 11 value chain partners. The A.I.S.E. network of members represents over 900 companies supplying both, household and professional cleaning and maintenance products and services to consumers and professional users.

A.I.S.E. has over the last 20 years delivered impactful projects to drive sustainable production, design and consumption

A.I.S.E.'S ACTIVE CONTRIBUTION TO UN & EU SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES



On the global stage, this industry sector is positively contributing to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In parallel, A.I.S.E.'s own business strategy is very much inspired by this global framework.

across the cleaning and hygiene industry in a responsible way. Sustainable development is one of A.I.S.E.'s strategic priorities enshrined in the industry vision 'A prospering cleaning and hygiene industry which is a role model for serving society in an innovative and sustainable way'. The leadership and coordination of voluntary sustainability initiatives together with stakeholder partners is a key defining strength of this industry and one which builds the industry's credibility, reputation and influence on technical and regulatory matters.

DETERGENTS AND PACKAGING

The use of packaging for detergents and maintenance products is key to avoid product leakage, to ensure safe use, to protect products during transport and to enable correct dosage. Typical materials that are used in the sector for packaging are:

- paper-based, e.g. folding cartons for dish-washing tablets
- rigid plastic, e.g. HDPE or PET for cleaner bottles
- flexible plastic, e.g. for plastic pouches for laundry gel capsules
- metals, e.g. for maintenance or aircare aerosol cans.

At the end of the product life cycle, it is essential that packaging is correctly collected and disposed of to ensure it is properly recycled and that potentially adverse environmental impacts are avoided.

A.I.S.E. STRATEGY ON PACKAGING AND ITS CONTRIBUTION TO THE EU PLASTIC STRATEGY

A.I.S.E. is committed to achieving sustainable development also through measures for a circular economy. In the case

of packaging, this applies to all types of packaging material used for the different products and categories. For instance, through its Charter for Sustainable Cleaning, A.I.S.E. has set up procedures and criteria for the efficient use of packaging material; indeed, via the Charter monitoring system, progress



can be demonstrated with a reduction of 32% of packaging volume (per unit of product dosage) since 2006. Whilst the A.I.S.E. strategy on packaging takes a holistic view looking at the full portfolio of packaging material, in recent years the public debate and the political landscape have focused on plastic materials. After the adoption of the EU Action Plan for a Circular Economy in December 2015, the EU Commission published on 16 January 2018 the first-ever Europe-wide strategy on plastics as one of its supporting actions. This strategy aims at protecting the environment from plastic pollution whilst fostering growth and innovation by transforming the way plastic products and packaging are designed, produced, used and recycled. One ambitious objective of the strategy is that by 2030 all plastic packaging should be recyclable. To achieve this goal, the strategy foresees actions to improve the economics and quality of plastic recycling, to curb plastic waste and littering, to drive investments and innovation and to harness global action.

Committed to the overall objective of the EU plastics strategy, A.I.S.E. set up a series of actions and collaborations with the objective to increase the contribution of the detergents and maintenance product sector.



A.I.S.E. AND THE EU PLASTIC STRATEGY

Our activities to concretely support the EU vision

A.I.S.E. Fact sheet • June 2019

Plastics are key in today's society and provide many benefits, such as light weight packaging for example. Yet, their recovery is still very low compared to their potential. In addition, littering and recent forms of leakage into the environment make us all - whether citizens, manufacturers or politicians - part of the problem, but also part of the solution. ...

In January 2018, the European Commission published its European Strategy for Plastics in a Circular Economy; this followed the broader EU Action Plan for a circular economy released end 2015.

This brochure provides an overview of the concrete activities that the detergents and maintenance products sector has undertaken to support this strategy, in close interaction with all stakeholders in the value chain at EU and national levels, to achieve a truly sustainable and circular use of plastics in Europe.



Plastic packaging - a key contributor to a Circular Economy

A.I.S.E. is committed to achieving sustainable development through a circular economy. This can only be achieved when all the phases of a product life cycle are considered, seeking continuous improvement in efficient designs and use of packaging materials, as well as education of consumers on sustainable consumption. A.I.S.E. supports the development of a strong market for secondary raw materials that will ensure the availability of high quality for such materials. To be successful, it is key that the whole value chain is engaged in the process.

A.I.S.E. contributes to a circular economy of packaging with the following initiatives:

- Voluntary industry initiatives by A.I.S.E. on:**
- Plastic packaging including targets by 2025, completed by guidance for sustainable design and regular reporting
 - Charter for Sustainable Cleaning including optimal product and packaging design criteria
 - Composition of household laundry detergents
 - Consumer engagement notably via on pack guidance for recycling
- Partnership with the Ellen MacArthur Foundation's New Plastics Economy Global Commitment**
- Contributions to notably the EU Circular Plastic Alliance on design and consumption**
- Financial contributions and support by members of our network to the various EPR schemes across the EU Member States, and close dialogue with local authorities through our National Associations**
- To view details on each of these initiatives as well as progress, please consult: www.aise.eu/packaging



- A.I.S.E. calls on the European and National Authorities to:**
1. Promote innovation (e.g. EPR modulated fees and economic incentives for the uptake of secondary raw materials, new technologies cooperating together to secure a shift to a circular economy)
 2. Support infrastructure and value-chain collaboration (e.g. between manufacturing companies, collection systems, recyclers, authorities)
 3. Secure legal certainty and essential requirements (e.g. on the concept of "recyclability") and a truly Single Market and harmonised approach for plastics strategy and legislation

A.I.S.E. alsbl • Boulevard du Souverain 165 • 1160 Brussels • Belgium
Phone: +32 2 679 62 60 • Fax: +32 2 679 62 66 • Email: aise.ma@aise.eu • VAT: BE 0538 183 615 www.aise.eu

Please contact A.I.S.E. for a copy of its factsheet

A.I.S.E.'s voluntary initiative on plastic packaging

In January 2019, A.I.S.E. opened its voluntary initiative on plastic packaging for signature. This initiative aims to increase the uptake of recycled content in plastic packaging over the next years. The participation in this industry initiative is open to all companies whether or not they are members of A.I.S.E. and its national association members. The companies signing up to this initiative shall commit to reach the following targets by 2025 for their household products in Europe:

- a minimum average of 20% uptake in volume of recycled plastics material of the company's products plastic packaging, and

- the intention to have all the products plastic packaging recyclable or reusable or compostable.



A.I.S.E. will monitor progress over the years and will foster exchange of best practices. A.I.S.E. has also started also intensify efforts as regard to collaboration in the plastic value chain to help companies reach those targets.

A.I.S.E. guiding principles on sustainable packaging design

To support all companies manufacturing and/or placing products on the market, A.I.S.E. has developed high-level principles to design sustainable plastic packaging for products. The principles steer towards a harmonised high-level approach to designing more recyclable packaging – thus, providing support to companies in achieving the targets of the A.I.S.E. voluntary initiative on plastic packaging (see above). Beyond encouraging each company to set ambitious targets and implement an effective management system, the guidance provides specific advice to ensure that each packaging unit is designed to be as sustainable and circular as possible. In particular each unit should be manufactured using recycled material and with the objective to be recyclable, both to the maximum extent possible; however, building on a life cycle approach it has to be considered that the improvement in the recyclability of a packaging can have an impact on other phases of its life cycle. More practical guidance is also given on high-level design criteria for more recyclable containers, e.g. considering labelling options and the compatibility of materials.

In addition to A.I.S.E.'s guiding principles, there are several existing tools and guidance developed by value chain partners that can be of great help for companies. These have been collected on the A.I.S.E. website to ensure that all companies, members and non-members have access to the most up to date know-how.

Find out more at www.aise.eu/packaging

A.I.S.E. endorsement of the New Plastics Economy Global Commitment

In March 2019, A.I.S.E. signed the Ellen MacArthur Foundation's New Plastics Economy Global Commitment. The Commitment encompasses a common vision of a circular economy across business sectors, that is focussed on innovation in the design of plastics, elimination



The Ellen MacArthur Foundation highly welcomed A.I.S.E. joining over 400 businesses, governments, NGOs and other organisations that signed this Global Commitment. The Foundation recognises that "achieving the systemic change needed to eliminate plastics waste and pollution requires collaboration not only within a sector but along the entire value chain".

Find out more here: www.newplasticseconomy.org

A.I.S.E. contribution to the work of the EU Circular Plastic Alliance

In December 2018 the European Commission launched the Circular Plastics Alliance (CPA), gathering key stakeholders in the plastics value chains to promote new voluntary action by industry for more recycled plastics. Together with more than 30 organisations, A.I.S.E. participated in a high-level stakeholder meeting in February 2019 in Brussels. The CPA identified relevant priorities for which specific recommendations/actions must be undertaken. These cover areas such as (i) plastic collection and sorting, (ii) product design for recycling, (iii) recycled plastic content in products, (iv) R&D investments with focus on chemical recycling and (v) monitoring of recycled plastics. All actions are being gathered into one document, namely the "Declaration", which is expected to be launched by the EU Commission for signature in autumn 2019.

CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS: WHAT IS PREVENTING US GOING EVEN FASTER?

While several initiatives are on-going and industry is committed to reaching the objectives and targets as set out, it is essential to have sufficient high-quality recycled plastics material available in sufficient quantities and with competitive prices versus virgin material for all market players from credible sources of supply.

In addition, conflicting legislation must be avoided. For instance, the current Classification, Labelling and Packaging (CLP) Regulation requirements are more conservative than in the past. This results in over classification, as proven by the fact that many products previously classified as 'irritants' are now classified as 'corrosive' even if the product formulation has not changed. If this is the basis to consider a product as 'hazardous', the sorting and collection of used up products may become more complex due to separate collection with the risk that lower quantities of this packaging material will be recycled.

There are further barriers, potentially hindering the objective to boost the uptake of recycled plastics material. To overcome those barriers A.I.S.E. suggests that stakeholders cooperate on the following:

Harmonisation

The collection systems across EU Member States and the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) schemes including fees should be better harmonised to ensure availability and quality of secondary raw materials and that there are no limits on cross-border shipments.

Consumer engagement

Better engagement with consumers and further education is needed in Europe as regard to collection and sorting; harmonised recycling labelling of packaging may help in case harmonised collection becomes a reality. In parallel, collection systems must be straightforward and not too complex for consumers.

Innovation friendliness

The door must remain open for new sorting and recycling technologies to treat innovative packaging solutions, but also for existing packaging that is currently not recycled or is hard to recycle.

CONCLUSION AND OUTLOOK

A.I.S.E. is committed to achieving sustainable development through a circular economy. This can only be achieved when all the phases of a product life cycle are considered, seeking continuous improvement in efficient designs and use of packaging materials, as well as education of consumers on sustainable consumption. A.I.S.E. supports the development of a strong market for secondary raw materials that will ensure the availability of high quality for such materials. To be successful, it is key that the whole value chain is engaged in the process. This will require efforts both at EU and national level, which A.I.S.E. is keen to support via its industry network.

For more information on all the initiatives, please get in touch with us via www.aise.eu ■

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Francesca Angiulli

Sustainability Manager, A.I.S.E.

Since 2015, Francesca Angiulli has been working with A.I.S.E., the international Association for Soaps, Detergents and Maintenance Products in Brussels. She started as a Technical Manager dealing with chemicals regulations and she is now supporting the development and implementation of A.I.S.E.'s strategy on Sustainable Development. In particular, she deals with the industry voluntary scheme on plastic packaging, the circular economy and bio-based materials.



Sascha Nissen

Head of Sustainability, A.I.S.E.

Since 2005, Sascha Nissen has been working with A.I.S.E., the international Association for Soaps, Detergents and Maintenance Products in Brussels. He is mainly involved in the development and implementation of A.I.S.E.'s strategy on Sustainable Development, covering a wide range of initiatives for the industry sector in Europe; these include the 'A.I.S.E. Charter for Sustainable Cleaning' and other industry voluntary schemes such as on social responsibility and the circular economy with activities linked to plastic packaging and bio-based materials.

