



Colgate Commits to Significant Recyclable Packaging Policy

Following engagement with nonprofit As You Sow, Colgate-Palmolive commits to making 100% of packaging for three of its product categories 100% recyclable by 2020.

Anne Marie Mohan | Apr. 21, 2014

After dialogue with environmental nonprofit As You Sow, personal care products company Colgate-Palmolive has committed to making 100% of its packaging for three of four product categories completely recyclable by 2020. In addition, Colgate has committed to work toward developing a recyclable toothpaste tube or package, which would bring its fourth product category close to the same sustainability standard. Most toothpaste tubes are made from unrecyclable plastic laminates.

“We congratulate Colgate-Palmolive on its leadership in phasing out unrecyclable packaging,” says Conrad MacKerron, Senior Vice President of As You Sow. “Huge amounts of embedded value and energy are being buried in landfills. These packages should be designed to be recycled, reducing the use of virgin natural resources and mitigating emissions that contribute to climate change.”

The company also agreed to increase the average recycled content of its packaging to 50%. Says As You Sow, increasing the recycled content of key packaging materials such as PET, polypropylene, and paper pulp is crucial to improving the sustainability of consumer packaging. Companies using packaging that is both made from recyclable materials and is recyclable after use help conserve resources and reduce waste.

Adds the nonprofit agency, unrecyclable packaging doesn't just end up in landfills. According to a recent assessment of marine debris by the Global Environment Facility, unrecyclable packaging gets swept into waterways, which contributes to the growing problem of plastic pollution of the world's oceans and damages marine ecosystems. There is also emerging evidence that plastic particles in the marine environment can absorb and spread toxics through the marine food web, and possibly to humans.

In 2012, As You Sow filed a shareholder resolution with Colgate-Palmolive requesting that it explore the feasibility of adopting an Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) policy for post-consumer packaging. The resolution argued that such a policy would help reduce carbon emissions and other pollution resulting from the company's business practices. As You Sow withdrew the proposal after Colgate-Palmolive agreed to engage in dialogue, which led to the new policy statement by the company.

Colgate's commitments include:

- By 2020 achieve 100% recyclable portfolio of Home, Pet, and Personal Care packaging—three out of four of its product categories
- Develop a fully recyclable toothpaste tube or other packaging in the fourth category, Oral Care
- Increase recycled content of packaging from 40% to 50%
- Reduce or eliminate use of polyvinyl chloride in packaging