

Coca-Cola, Nestle Finally Accept End-of-Life Product Stewardship

SUSTAINABLEBUSINESS.COM | August 16, 2011

After decades of pressure to do so, Coca-Cola and Nestle Waters North America say they will take responsibility for collecting and recycling used bottles and cans, if states pass laws requiring that.

The companies are actively supporting extended producer responsibility laws for post-consumer packaging - similar to those in place in Canada and Europe - to reverse lagging US bottle and can recycling rates, according to a report by shareholder advocacy group, **As You Sow**.

"Waste & Opportunity: U.S. Beverage Container Recycling Scorecard and Report," is **As You Sow's** third review of the beverage industry and its recycling efforts since 2006.

"The major development since our last survey has been the willingness of leading beverage companies to consider new legislative mandates requiring them to take responsibility for their post-consumer packaging," says Conrad MacKerron, Senior Director of **As You Sow's** Corporate Social Responsibility Program.

"Many beverage and consumer packaged goods companies pay fees in other countries to finance recovery of their packaging. It's significant that companies are finally acknowledging the need to take responsibility in the US as well," he adds.

Of the 224 billion beverage containers sold annually in the U.S. only 29 percent by weight are recycled; the rest are landfilled or incinerated, resulting in a huge waste of natural resources. In Europe and Canada, where stewardship laws are in place, far higher levels of containers are recovered.

The report scores companies on key performance areas related to end-of-life recovery. Nestle received the highest rank, followed closely by PepsiCo, Coca-Cola, and Red Bull. All four received a letter grade of B-.

"Several leading beverage companies continue to make steady incremental progress on source reduction but have not demonstrated strong commitments to using recycled content - a significant driver in reducing the environmental impact of packaging," says Amy Galland, Ph.D., **As You Sow's** Research Director and author of the study.

Only PepsiCo maintains a consistent level of 10 percent recycled PET in all product lines sold in the U.S. since 2005.

Nestle received the highest score for container recovery and goals and strategies for recovery.

Brewing companies were notably absent. Anheuser Busch refused to participate even though they got the second highest score in the 2008 edition of the report.

The report says the beverage industry needs to greatly increase engagement with stakeholders and other industries to achieve strong buy-in for producer responsibility packaging legislation.

In addition, companies need to put more resources into designing packaging for recycling that includes full consideration of the end-of-life concerns.

Download "Waste & Opportunity 2011" here:

Website: www.asyousow.org/sustainability/bev_survey.shtml

Photo by Jasonk./flickr/Creative Commons