

Brussels, January 2020

**FEVE - The European Container Glass Industry fully supports the recently published
Commission Circular Economy roadmap and action plan¹**

The European Container Glass manufacturing industry has 160 glass manufacturing plants in the EU and maintains 125.000 jobs operating in a circular economy business model with 76% of all our products sold in the EU going back to our factories to make new food and beverage packaging.

The glass packaging sector is committed to collaborate with the Commission to achieve its goals and objectives and we call for support to our industry in this effort. An efficient EU Circular Economy would also contribute to the targets set by the European Green Deal and to the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Industry circular economy credentials

By having fully integrated glass recycling into our industrial processes for more than 50 years and advocating for separate collection systems of glass across the EU, the industry is a pioneer of the Circular Economy model for packaging in Europe and therefore a key enabler of a Responsible Consumption and Production lifestyle. Today we have achieved a recycling rate of 76%. Glass is a permanent material that is infinitely recyclable in a closed loop without losing its properties and, thanks to its inertness, is perfectly fit for food and beverage packaging no matter how many times it is recycled. We incorporate more recycled content than virgin materials in our packaging: on average 52% of our raw materials is recycled glass. Glass also offers a reusable option for customers who are part of refund schemes. Refillable bottles can be reused up to 40 times and still be recycled at the end of their life.

UN Sustainable Development Goals

By further optimizing our business model, we can support the EU commitments to the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. The circular production of a glass packaging is inherently relevant to the UN Sustainable Consumption and Production Goal (SDG 12). As a closed loop production system, we are circular by nature and we work in tight partnership with our stakeholders – from the energy and raw material suppliers to the end consumer - to

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/initiatives/ares-2019-7907872_en

make sure our Circular Economy works better and better (UN SDG 17). With this aim, we have recently set the foundations of “Close the Glass Loop”(<https://feve.org/about-glass/introducing-close-the-glass-loop/>) an industry platform to drive a material stewardship programme to increase the quantity and quality of available recycled glass. With ‘Close the Glass Loop’ we want to achieve a 90% average EU collection rate of used glass packaging by 2030 (up from the current average of 76%) and improve the quality of recycled glass.

Major challenges posed by systems approach

However, there are major challenges ahead of us which need to be addressed with a systems approach, which requires human and financial resources to be allocated, and throughout our own value chain. We strongly believe that a real Circular Economy can be created only by taking a systemic approach that would encourage economic, social and political players that today work in an independent and isolated way to handle complex challenges with a global approach.

Adopting a circular economy model to effectively manage the end-of-life of packaging is crucial. However, while major resources have been quickly put in place by policy and market forces to fix the plastics problem hardly any attention is paid to support existing alternative packaging materials like glass which have proven to be circular already, with little resources being made available to optimize our already existing circular economy model. The glass packaging value chain also needs investments in generalizing separate collection, improving sorting techniques, informing consumers. It is also important not to destroy the existing and well-functioning bottle bank network by introducing competing systems like Deposit Refund Schemes for recycling.

Call to action to Close the Glass Loop

We call on policy makers to work arm in arm with our industry to ensure that future decisions improve the investment conditions, stimulate innovation and keep us competitive in Europe. We call on the European, National and Local authorities to concretely support the “Close the Glass Loop” platform in achieving its objectives which are totally aligned and functional to the achievement of the EC Circular Economy goals.

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About FEVE

FEVE is the association of European manufacturers of glass containers. The glass packaging industry generates 125 000 direct and indirect jobs thanks to 160 Container glass production sites in Europe producing a wide range of glass packaging products for food and beverages, perfumery, cosmetics and pharmacy for European and global customers. FEVE members have plants in 23 European Member States. Container glass is one of Europe’s best recycled products. See more on www.feve.org.