



Press Release

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Single-use plastics – paper industry shares MEPs’ perplexity on ill-defined “catch-all” product scope

The European Commission’s proposal on single use plastics products (SUPP), aims at addressing the marine pollution caused by the most littered plastics products. Yet an ill-defined product scope, open for interpretation, could consider any material using any sort of plastics layer or coating as plastics, whether the materials is in contact with food or for other functionalities.

During their first discussion on the SUPP proposal, members of the Environment committee of the European Parliament have expressed their perplexity regarding its definition and scope. The rapporteur **Frédérique Ries** stated that the Commission’s proposal is indeed too vague and open for interpretation.

Her colleague and shadow rapporteur **Massimo Paolucci** also questioned definitions and the lack of emphasis on recyclability. **Mark Demesmaeker**, also shadow rapporteur, even wondered whether cardboard boxes with plastic coatings should be also considered as plastic. Similarly the European Commission also admitted there is a grey area and that definitions should be improved.

Reacting to the debates, CEPI urges a clear and clean-cut definition to avoid other materials being inadvertently classified as plastics and an implementation chaos.

“Leaving the text wide-open for interpretation with ill-thought definitions will lead to implementation chaos, not least for the SUP but also for the entire Packaging Waste Directive and products classification on the market” say Sylvain Lhôte, Director General of CEPI. The Directive is aimed at, and should therefore be focused on, the single-use plastics products most present in the marine environment.”

Paper packaging is not just recyclable but massively recycled, at a rate of **84.6%** ([Eurostat 2016](#)), far and beyond any other material. It also does not show up amongst most littered application found on European beaches according the European Environment Agency surveys. There is no rationale to mix-up the scope and cover other materials.

Note to editor:

CEPI is the pan-European association representing the forest fibre and paper industry. Through its 18 national associations CEPI gathers 495 companies operating more than 900 pulp and paper mills across Europe producing paper, cardboard, pulp and other bio-based products. **84.6%** of paper-based packaging is recycled in the EU and this level will further rise with the new packaging and packaging waste directive. Coated or not with plastics, paper-based packaging are recyclable and recycled.