

METRO PLANS TO SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCE ITS PLASTIC FOOTPRINT BY 2025

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- Together with its national subsidiaries, the Düsseldorf-based wholesale and food specialist adopted a global voluntary self-commitment regarding the use of disposable plastics
- METRO set itself the goal of optimally navigating its customers through the transition and all related questions and challenges
- By 2025, conventional single-use plastics are to be replaced by reusable, recyclable or compostable alternatives and the transition to a closed circular economy for plastics is to be promoted
- The basis are trustful partnerships with the company's own national subsidiaries and with sparring partners from industry, politics and NGOs
- Beyond the self-commitment, METRO is successfully working on optimising the packaging of its own brand products

Düsseldorf, 28 September 2018 - In the framework of the comprehensive METRO Plastics Initiative, the Düsseldorf-based international wholesale specialist today published its global self-commitment regarding the use of single-use plastics – coordinated with, and supported by, METRO's national subsidiaries. Millions of customers from the hotel, restaurant and catering industry use disposable products on a daily basis – from napkins to take-out boxes. This is where METRO has the greatest lever to drive sustainable change. In close consultation with its customers, the METRO entities and partners along the complete supply chain, the METRO Plastics Initiative is continually developed further. Because one thing is clear for the wholesale operator: Sustainable change and pioneering progress are only successful when cooperating in partnerships.

METRO cultivates close relationships based on partnership with more than 21 million wholesale customers. Many of them operate in the hotel, restaurant and catering business where work without single-use plastic products is still difficult to imagine. But significant progress can be made in this regard by offering sustainable alternatives in the assortment and by promoting a plastics economy that transfers plastic products into a closed circular economy and thereby uses resources efficiently. To this effect METRO, in close cooperation with its own national subsidiaries, adopted a global self-commitment regarding the use of conventional disposable plastics:

By 2025, we will empower our customers' businesses to move into a future without conventional single use plastic and increase resource efficiency by:

- Providing reusable, recyclable and compostable alternatives
- Supporting our customers in this phase out and
- Advocating for the movement towards a circular economy regarding plastic.

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“For us, acting sustainably means to not only look for quick wins but, rather, to systematically work towards positive change”, says Heiko Hutmacher, Member of the Management Board of METRO AG responsible for Sustainability. The company pursues a comprehensive sustainability strategy. “Important elements in this regard are an extensive range of alternatives to conventional plastic products and purposefully promoting closed-loop material cycles”, continues Hutmacher.

That is why the wholesale company focuses on offering alternatives in the field of disposable dishes: high-quality raw materials and mono-materials can be more easily transferred into a material cycle, i.e. they can be reused multiple times. Renewable resources such as wood, plant fibres, sugarcane or corn starch are used as materials for reusable dishes whereby the focus is clearly set on using those components that do not interfere with the food chain. Through innovative start-ups such as HALM, robust, reusable glass straws are offered, for example. METRO is aware of the fact that the use and disposal of plastics currently represents a major factor of uncertainty. For this reason, METRO is focusing on advice and information to support its customers in the choice of materials suited for their needs, to give them tips for correct disposal, and to provide them with information that benefits them in their conversations with their own customers.

In addition, packaging of food and non-food products forms part of the daily life at METRO. From the producer to transport of the product to the store and all the way to the customer’s kitchen it must be ensured along the whole supply chain that the product packaging is selected in such a way that the food sold by METRO meets the customer’s exacting demands in terms of quality and safety. A well-selected packaging can significantly improve the shelf life of food and thereby prevent food waste. This notwithstanding, METRO is aware of the challenge of waste of resources due to single use and of the increasing volumes of plastic waste in the environment and the seas. That is why, in the framework of the METRO Plastics Initiative, the wholesale specialist has been engaged in a packaging optimisation initiative in the field of own brand products since 2014. This initiative is currently supported by 12 METRO countries. Own brand products account for around 17% of METRO’s assortment. Up until 2018, some 11,000 own brand products have already been subjected to a packaging optimisation check. The objective: to reduce the weight, material strength, dimensions and coatings of a packaging. That way, as much as 400 tons of packaging material have already been saved since 2014. Another focus is also on phasing out problematic plastics: PVC and PVDC are gradually being banned as packaging materials and EPS is only used in those cases where no viable alternatives exist. In brief: the packaging waste is to be minimised and METRO’s plastic footprint is to be reduced in combination with optimised logistics and transport efficiency. In addition, METRO is working on improving its waste and garbage management in cooperation with third party service providers to increase recycling rates.

Using the occasion of the international World Oceans Day on 8 June, METRO launched an internal awareness campaign under the hashtag #METROPlasticFighters which has since sensitised around 150,000 employees for this topic through information and educational campaigns. On the same day, a system of returnable cups was introduced on the METRO Campus thus ensuring that the coffee-to-go can now be enjoyed in reusable cups while on the go. The signs of a fresh start can also be noticed at the company restaurants: by 2019, a returnables system shall replace the present non-returnable solutions.

“Partnerships for the goals” is the title of the 17th Sustainable Development Goal (SDG)

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stipulated by the United Nations. To be able to use plastics in a resource-efficient manner going forward, METRO specifically focuses on the dialogue with the stakeholders along the complete plastics value chain, starting from the producers to the scientific community and politics all the way to the disposal companies and NGOs. Against this backdrop, METRO hosted a round table event under the heading "Unser Ausweg aus dem Einweg" ("Our way out of the one-way") to discuss about the challenges, opportunities and potential solutions with various stakeholders from the fields of recycling, disposable products, hospitality as well as from EU politics and representatives of METRO Germany on 20 September 2018. The participants included, inter alia, Julia Philipp, Accredited Assistant of MEP Karl-Heinz Florenz, Dr. Henning Wilts, Director of the Division Circular Economy at the Wuppertal Institute, Joachim Nolte, Key Account Manager Interseroh, Frank Kolvenbach, Sales Director PAPSTAR and Kay Küsters, a restaurant owner in Dormagen.

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METRO is a leading international specialist in wholesale and food retail. The company operates in 35 countries and employs more than 150,000 people worldwide. In financial year 2016/17, METRO generated sales of approximately €37 billion. The company provides custom solutions to meet the regional and international needs of its wholesale and retail customers. With its sales brands METRO/MAKRO Cash & Carry and Real as well as delivery services and digitisation initiatives, METRO sets the standards for tomorrow: for customer focus, digital solutions and sustainable business models.

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