Packaging & Packaging Waste Regulation

Infographic
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Edition March 2026

PPWR, the Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation, is the new European legislation that aims to make packaging more sustainable and circular. This infographic brings together all the essential information so that you can see the most important obligations and changes at a glance. It was developed by Pack4Food and is being shared as part of the collaboration between Food Radar and R-EU-CYCLE. If you have any further questions or would like more information about PPWR, please contact Pack4Food (info@pack4food.be) or one of the other project partners.

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Pack4Food

Definition

2025/40

REGULATION (EU) 2025/40 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL

of 19 December 2024

on packaging and packaging waste, amending Regulation (EU) 2019/1020 and Directive (EU) 2019/904, and repealing Directive 94/62/EC

"2025"

- 11/02/2025 → PPWR into force
- 12/08/2026 → first measurements into action

"Regulation"

- PPWR is a regulation, which means that it will directly come into action in all member states of the EU. In theory, no additional national legislation is required.

"Packaging and packaging waste"

- PPWR will apply to all packaging & packaging waste that is present on the EU sector, regardless of the sector or application of the packaging

"Directive 94/62/EC"

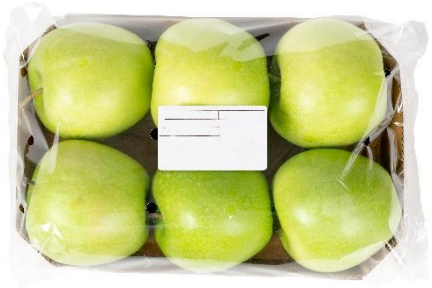
- Original 1994 legislation: Packaging & Packaging Waste Directive (PPWD)
- PPWR is the 2025 update of PPWD and replaces this 1994 legislation

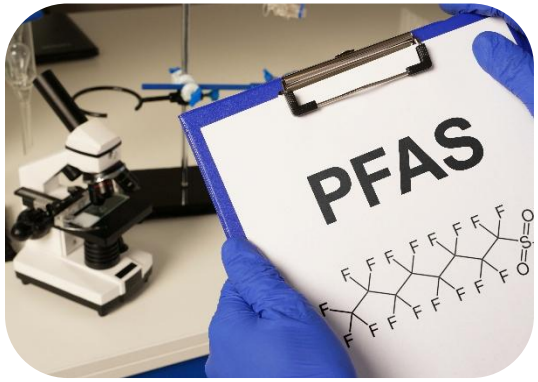
4 R strategy

The EU Commission uses a strategy in PPWR, which can be summarized as the 4 R strategy. Each R represents one group of measurements.

PPWR mentions clear targets ("what") and deadlines ("when"), but still need additional "secondary" legislation to specify the exact rules ("how"). Secondary legislation is still under construction.

Refuse – "Ban on certain packaging formats"





From **01/01/2030**, operators are no longer allowed to put certain packaging formats on the market (listed in Annex V of PPWR)

- Still grey areas & discussions on content of annex V
- Guideline to explain annex V → publication in 2027

Some examples from Annex V

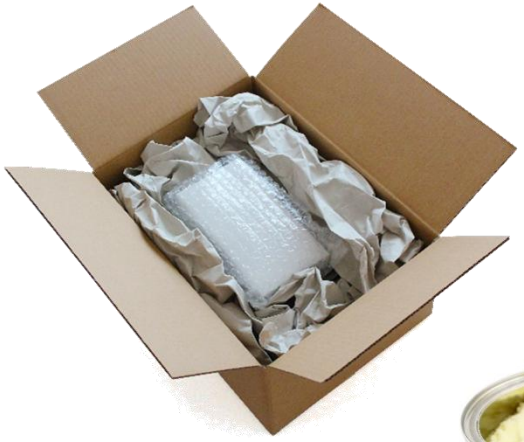
- No single-use **plastic packaging** used at the point of sale to **group goods** sold in bottles, cans, tins, pots, tubs, and packets designed as convenience packaging to enable or **encourage consumers to purchase more than one product**. This excludes grouped packaging necessary **to facilitate handling.**

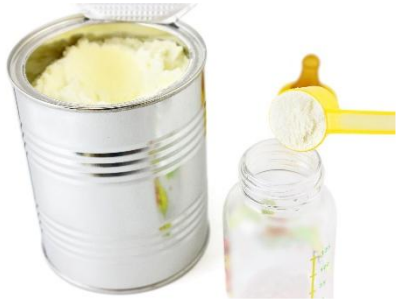
- Single use plastic packaging for less than **1,5kg fresh fruit and vegetables** (unless needed for shelf-life).

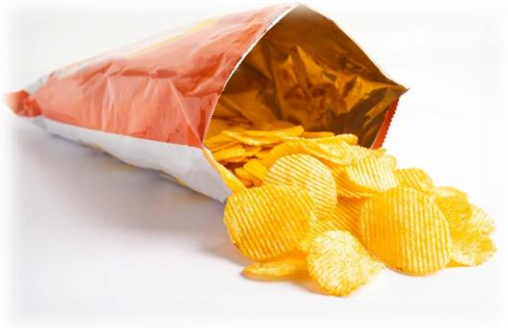
Requirements for substances in packaging

- Food-contact packaging shall not be placed on the market if it contains PFAS in a concentration equal to or above the specified limit values.

Reduce - "Minimization of packaging configurations"







From **01/01/2030**, weight and volume of the packaging should be reduced to the minimum volume, necessary to ensure its functionality.

How should this be done?

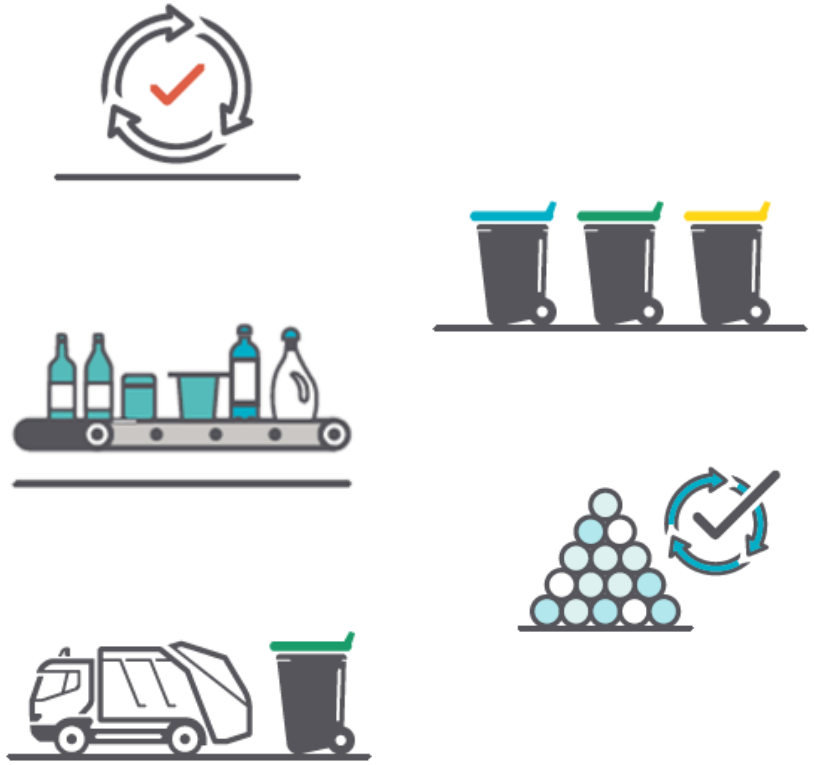
- Avoid characteristics aimed to increase perceived volume of the product e.g. double walls, false bottoms and unnecessary layers.
- Respect the max. % of empty space that is allowed in the packaging (= "empty space ratio").
  - Example e-commerce → empty space ratio = max. 50 %
  - Still unclear what ratio will be for other sectors.

Important for food packaging

- Products subject to settlement after packing.
  - Empty space ratio will be assessed at the time of filling
  - Example: milk powder in a metal can
- Modified Atmosphere packaging
  - Air between or within packed foodstuff or protective gases shall not be considered as empty space.
  - Example: bag of crisps

Recycle – "Design for recycling criteria"

"All packaging that is placed on the market, shall be recyclable **by 1st of January 2030"**
Packaging will be considered recyclable in Europe if it:



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1. **"Complies with the design for recycling performance grades"**
   Should have a sufficient score on Recyclability performance assessment".

2. **"Effectively and efficiently separately collected"**
   I.e. the packaging should fit within the collection scheme of the country where it is placed on the market

3. **"Sorted into defined waste streams without affecting recyclability of other waste streams"**

4. **"Can be recycled so that the resulting secondary raw materials are of sufficient quality to substitute the primary raw materials"**
   I.e. qualitative recycling > downcycling

5. **"Can be recycled at scale"**
   i.e. the packaging waste should fit within an existing recycling stream of sufficient scale.

Recycle – "Recyclability performance assessment"

01/01/2030 **2035**

Grade	Weight recyclable	Recycled at scale	Allowed on market
A	95 %	Recycled at scale score: A, B, C	✓
B	80 %		✓
C	70 %		✓
Considered non-recyclable	< 70 %	Recycling at scale not met	✗

2038

Grade	Weight recyclable	Recycled at scale	Allowed on market
A	95 %	Recycled at scale score: A, B, C	✓
B	80 %		✓
Considered non-recyclable	70 %	Recycling at scale not met	✗
	< 70 %		✗

From 01/01/2030, each packaging should comply with the design for recycling performance grades.

- Only packaging with grade A, B and C are allowed on EU market
- Methodology to calculate recycling performance grade is still unknown.
- Guidelines will be published → timing: 2028

From 01/01/2035

- Only packaging with grade A, B and C are allowed on EU market + should be recyclable at scale
- Methodology to calculate "recyclability at scale" still unknown.

From 01/01/2038

- Only packaging with grade A, B are allowed on EU market + should be recyclable at scale

Minimum Recycled content (as of 01/01/2030)

Contact sensitive plastic packaging (PET as major component)

2030 > 30 %

2040 > 50 %

Contact sensitive plastic packaging (all other then PET)

2030 > 10 %

2040 > 25 %

Single use plastic beverage bottles

2030 > 30 %

2040 > 65 %

Other plastic packaging

2030 > 35 %

2040 > 65 %

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