

Precious Resource

Back to Basics

Metal, the resource at the core of our business as it is the predominant material in our products, scores high marks across all three dimensions of sustainability: economic, environmental and social.

Underpinning the format's sustainability credentials is the fact that it is produced from permanent materials such as aluminum and iron ore that can be infinitely recycled with no loss of physical properties. These natural elements maintain their properties forever, making metal a key contributor to the circular economy. In other words, once metal enters the material-to-material loop, where it gets recycled again and again, it will always be available for future use. This constant reuse into new containers or other metal products saves raw materials and energy and reduces CO2 emissions. Consider these facts:

- Up to 80% of all metal ever produced in the world is still available for use.
- Recycling aluminum saves more than 90% of the energy needed to make new aluminum.
- Steel recycling saves up to 70% of the energy needed for primary productions.

The sustainability narrative of metal packaging is driven by several key pillars:

Unbeatable Recyclability

Aluminum continues to maintain its position as the most sustainable beverage package, delivering a long shelf life, high recyclability rates and material value. For example, American consumers recycle aluminum beverage cans at rates 10-20 points higher than competing beverage package types. Aluminum cans also contain about 70% recycled content on average, three times higher than other formats. In Europe, more than 7 out of 10 aluminum beverage cans remain in the circular economy, with the overall recycling rate in the European Union, Switzerland, Norway and Iceland increasing by 1.8% to a new record level of 71.3% in 2013.

Steel recycling rates in Europe also hit an all-time high, reaching 77.5% in 2015 and representing an increase of 1.5 percentage points from 2014. In the U.S., recycling rates continue to hold steady around the 70% mark, in part due to the high level of access to steel recycling. More than 18,000 curbside, drop-off and buyback programs accept steel cans, reaching more than 160 million consumers across the country. This reach also extends to steel aerosol recycling, with over 214 million people in the U.S. having the opportunity to recycle these containers.

This well-established recycling infrastructure is based on the fact that aluminum and steel are the most valuable of all major recycled materials. In fact, the materials are so valuable that they more than pay for the cost of their own collection and effectively subsidize the recycling of other, less valuable materials like paper and plastic.

Beverage Cans are the Most Recycled Beverage Package in the World.

- Aluminum cans are the most recycled beverage package in the world and have a significantly higher global average recycling rate than PET bottles. A recent analysis of global recycling data by Resource Recycling Systems (RRS) established a global weighted average recycling rate of 69% for aluminum beverage cans, compared to PET containers at 43%.
- Data on beverage container recycling rates for 25 countries, representing 80% of the global market, were reviewed and validated by RRS for the study. Several of those countries have a more than 90% aluminum can recycling rate including Argentina (91.1%), Belgium (96.0%), Brazil (97.9%), Germany (97.4%), Sweden (91.0%) and Switzerland (91.2%).

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