

Contact: Delanie Bezuidenhout
Telephone no: (082) 444-6866
Email address: Delanie@packagingsa.co.za
Website: www.metpacsa.org.za



PRESS RELEASE

Aluminium cans and metal packaging: *MetPac-SA sets its sights high*

Johannesburg, 10 July 2017. MetPac-SA, the newly-formed producer responsibility organisation representing the steel, tinsplate and aluminium packaging industries, has identified the increase of the recycling of metal packaging as one of its main objectives.

Precious metals in the recycling stream

“Aluminium and steel packaging are the world’s most recycled packaging and are literally worth their weight in gold. Originally, beverage cans were made from steel, and have successfully been collected in South Africa for the past 25 years. In many regards, it can be said that we have lead the way for responsible recovery and recycling of packaging in our country,” says Delanie Bezuidenhout, CEO of MetPac-SA.



According to Delanie, aluminium and metal cans are regarded as high value items by recyclers, and therefore has the potential for generating greater income and securing bigger margins across the entire collection chain. “Buy-back centres continue to pay well for cans that are collected, thereby providing a much needed income for schools and informal collectors. We want to ensure that every can entering the market is collected and recycled and that everybody in the value chain works together – from the informal collectors pushing their trolleys, through to the scrap dealers,” she stated.

Recycling aluminium cans not only saves on scarce natural resources, such as Bauxite - the principal ore used for aluminium production imported from tropical and sub-tropical areas such as the West Indies, South America and Australia where it naturally occurs - but also on energy. “Twenty recycled cans can be made with the energy needed to produce one new can using primary aluminium ingot. Similarly, recycling one beverage can saves the amount of energy needed to burn a 100w bulb for 4 hours,” Delanie explained.

Spreading the message to the community

Over the past 25 years, the local cans industry has built an impressive track record of recycling accomplishments, thanks to the terrific work done by Collect-a-Can and their shareholders who have achieved much success with their recoveries and ongoing education about recycling. Founded by ArcelorMittal South Africa and Nampak as a way to proactively address the beverage can industry's responsibility to the environment, Collect-a-Can has played a major role in the recovery of scrap tinsplate generated in the tinsplate and can-making processes, including cut-offs, misprints, sub-standard fills, and most importantly used metal cans.

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When Collect-a-Can began, there was no unified policy on addressing the growth of waste. The public was sceptical and automatically opposed to new waste site proposals. Since then, much has changed as thought and support are given to regulations for waste and environmental control. This has helped to improve southern Africa's used beverage can recovery rate from 18% to around 72%. It is one of MetPac-SA's key objectives to build on the successes the industry has achieved thus far with the effective collection and recycling of steel cans.

Industry taking responsibility for its waste

"We are also fortunate to have important end-users such as Hulamin on our Board of Directors, as they understand the important role recycling plays in ensuring the sustainability of our industry and the environment," Delanie says. Over the past 75 years, Hulamin has intimately been involved in the recycling of their internally generated process scrap as well as the fabrication scrap generated by customers. They took this commitment a significant step further by investing R300m two years ago in a recycling plant that process and cleans used beverage cans, thereby enhancing the company's capability in the recycling of aluminium scrap.

"Recycling certainly makes a lot of business sense to us and for this reason we have adopted the principle of 'extended producer responsibility' in our business. Simply put, this means that if we make a product, we also take our share of the responsibility for its recycling at the end of its life," says Riccardo Benedetti, Commercial Manager: Metals and Recycling at Hulamin. "Recycling not only supplies us with aluminium raw material, but also ensures that products made from our aluminium are not lost to the precious aluminium resource pool," he adds.

Scrap with worth

A key recycling collection channel for the metals sector is the scrap metals industry. "We are expecting the amount of aluminium recoveries from beverage cans alone to increase significantly over the next 5 years. In order to minimise the risk of illegal scrap exports, which ultimately reduces the locally-available scrap pool, MetPac-SA will also be closely monitoring and working with the players in this sector," Delanie explains.

Delanie stresses that MetPac-SA is open to collaborating on recycling initiatives with different associations in order to step up its recycling successes. "We believe that significant benefits and synergies can be unlocked by packaging waste streams joining hands and working together. For example, material collection can greatly be enhanced through reverse logistics in the supply chain.

Driving the recycling message home

Although there are numerous recycling initiatives and incentives established in communities around the country, as well as collection points in close proximity to neighbourhoods, MetPac-SA believes that an inherent recycling culture still needs to be established in South Africa.

"We're adding our voice to that of other material streams in educating the public around the why, what and how of recycling. Once consumers truly understand the need and value of recycling and the importance of reusing metal packaging, they will stop citing factors such as drop off points or storage space as barriers to recycling. However, we do agree with the repeated calls by more established players in the packaging industry that an effective separation-at-source infrastructure needs to be implemented at municipal level," she appealed.

For more information, about MetPac-SA, please our website at www.metpacsa.org.za

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