

Ambition 2025: Unilever

On any given day, around 2.5 billion people, across more than 190 countries, use a Unilever product. This puts Unilever in a position to help create a waste-free world where no packaging ever enters the environment – on land, in waterways and in our oceans.

Unilever is on track to achieve its commitments announced in 2017 to ensure all of its plastic packaging is reusable, recyclable or compostable by 2025, and to use at least 25% recycled plastic in its packaging.

Unilever recognises that plastic is a valuable material. It is crucial for the safe and efficient distribution of products, and it has a lower carbon footprint than many alternative

materials. So, it has its place. But that place is definitely not littering streets, rivers and oceans.

It is, however, inside the circular economy – where it is reused, recycled or composted. And where it is kept in a loop, to stop it from ever finding its way into the environment.

Unilever takes the position that, if even one of their bottles ends up in the environment, that's one too many. Their plastic is their responsibility.

Therefore, in 2019 they made two new commitments:

By 2025, reduce the amount of virgin plastic packaging in their packaging by 50%

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When it comes to virgin plastic, they will deliver this in two ways. Firstly, by removing more than 100,000 tonnes of plastic packaging by accelerating multi-use packs – such as reusable and refillable formats – and ‘no plastic’ solutions, which includes alternative packaging materials and ‘naked’ products. Secondly, by accelerating use of recycled plastic in packaging.

By 2025, help collect and process more plastic packaging than they sell

This will be done in three ways: invest and partner to improve waste management infrastructure in many of the countries they operate in; purchase and use recycled plastics in packaging; and participate in extended producer responsibility schemes where they pay for the collection of their packaging.

In 2018, Unilever UK & Ireland became a founding member of the UK Plastics Pact, an ambitious multi-stakeholder initiative, led by WRAP, which aims to transform the plastic packaging system in the UK. As well as accelerating progress towards the company’s own stretching targets, Unilever UK & Ireland is working towards making a significant contribution towards the UK Plastics Pact targets.

“We can only eliminate plastic waste by acting fast and tracking radical action at all points in the cycle. This demands a fundamental rethink in our approach to our packaging and products. It requires us to introduce new and innovative materials, and scale up new business models, like reuse and refill formats, at an unprecedented speed and intensity.”

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Alan Jope, CEO, Unilever

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