

Press Release No. 31/2011

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Upwards trend in disposable plastic bottles continues

Study: Market shares of ecologically advantageous beverage packaging down once again

Disposable plastic bottles are squeezing reusable bottles and drinks cartons out of the market. The market share of returnable and ecologically advantageous disposable beverage packaging continues to decline. It sank again slightly in 2009, with a share of only 51.8 percent, which is clearly below the target level of 80 percent that the amended packaging ordinance for mass-produced beverages prescribes. Although the percentage of beverage in disposable glass bottles and cans has dropped sharply, the share of disposable plastic bottles has spiked at the same time—mainly to the disadvantage of the returnable glass bottle and beverage cartons. These are the results of a study carried out by the Gesellschaft für Verpackungsmarktforschung (GVM) on behalf of the Federal Environment Agency (UBA).

“Beverages packed in reusable glass and plastic bottles are still the most environmentally friendly. The best green alternative is the reusable bottle from a regional supplier”, said UBA President Jochen Flasbarth. The reusable packaging system has proven to help reduce waste volume and to cut down on transport. “The Federal Environment Agency is supporting the Federal government initiative to introduce a labeling requirement for disposable beverage packaging. This will help consumers make the right choice”, added Flasbarth. The labeling requirement would make it easy to distinguish between disposable and returnable packaging.

A total of 31.8 billion litres of beverages were consumed in 2009. About one third (34.2 percent) was bottled in reusable glass bottles. 15 percent was sold in recyclable plastic bottles, and another 2.6 percent in ecologically advantageous disposable beverage packaging, which includes the beverage carton and the stand-up pouch (see chart). As a result, the share for returnable and ecologically advantageous disposable beverage packaging is 51.8 percent. The other half was packed in disposable plastic and glass bottles and cans, with an overall share of 48.2 percent, the lion's share of which is taken by disposable plastic bottles. Their share of 46.3 percent comprises nearly one half of all beverage packaging. The individual drinks market segments vary widely: whereas the reusable glass bottle for beer even topped the excellent result of the previous year at 88.5 percent, the share of returnable and ecologically advantageous disposable beverage packaging continued to decline: for water (43.8 percent), and soft drinks (37.4 percent).

The 3rd amendment to the packaging ordinance in 2005 defined a guideline level of 80 percent share for returnable and ecologically advantageous disposable beverage packaging. Yet since 2004 that share has sunk steadily. Returnable and ecologically advantageous beverage packaging still dominated the market in 2004 with a 71.7 percent share. In 2009, that share was 51.8 percent (see chart).

Further information and links:

To download charts: *Packmittelstruktur des Getränkeverbrauchs 2009* and *Anteile der Packmittel am Getränkeverbrauch* click here:

http://www.umweltbundesamt.de/uba-info-presse/2011/pdf/verpackung_2009.pdf

Consumption of beverages in one-way and reusable packaging 2009 study (in German: *Verbrauch von Getränken in Ein- und Mehrwegverpackungen - Berichtsjahr 2009*) is available for download here:

<http://www.uba.de/uba-info-medien-e/3980.html>

Dessau-Roßlau, 22 June 2011