

Recycle plastic waste - avoid marine plastic pollution and microplastic pollution

Fair Recycled Plastic processes plastic waste in India and then uses the recycled material in Swirl® and handy bag® bin liners. In this way the Melitta Group is taking an innovative step towards a circular economy for plastics and at the same time bringing about social progress for many people in Bangalore.

The consumption of products around the world has increased enormously in recent years and decades. This has led to a sharp increase in the amount of waste worldwide. This rise in the volume of waste poses major challenges, especially for developing and emerging countries as they often have no effective nationwide waste management system. Waste ends up at the roadside, in the environment and in bodies of water. Plastics are usually at the centre of this problem. The result is that plastic and microplastics end up in our oceans and in the environment. It has been proven that about 90 percent of the plastic waste in the world's oceans originally comes from ten rivers. Eight of these rivers flow through Asia.

“Plastic pollution in the environment and oceans is a serious problem that is rightly attracting a lot of attention and there is an urgent need for solutions,” commented Oliver Strelecki, Managing Director of Cofresco, a subsidiary of the Melitta Group and manufacturer of Swirl® and handy bag® brand bin liners, among other things. “As a plastic producer, we are aware of our responsibility. We don't want to be part of the problem, but part of the solution. Fair Recycled Plastic represents an important milestone for us in our overall commitment to sustainability,” explained Oliver Strelecki.

Fair Recycled Plastic aims to prevent microplastic pollution and plastic pollution in the oceans by collecting, processing and reusing plastic waste. “Plastic that ends up as waste in the environment is harmful, no question. But plastic is not automatically bad. We have to draw a distinction here,” explained Martin Rogall, Chief Sustainability Officer at Cofresco. After all, we can hardly imagine life without plastics. Among other things, they facilitate hygiene, can be a very good practical aid for transport and they help to extend the shelf life of foodstuffs. They have properties that other materials do not possess at all, or often only provide with a worse eco-balance. “If plastics are consistently recycled, they are the more environmentally friendly alternative and a valuable raw material.” For plastics to be reused, they have to be collected and processed properly. “And this is where we come in with Fair Recycled Plastic,” explained Martin Rogall.

New recycling plant in Bangalore processes plastic waste from waste pickers

Up to 2,000 tonnes of plastic waste collected by waste pickers in India will be delivered to the new recycling company ‘Vishuddh Recycling Pvt. Ltd’ in Bangalore every year. At the plant, 20 employees currently process waste into recyclate,

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which is used in the production of Swirl® and handy bag® brand bin liners. “Not all plastics are suitable for the production of bin liners,” explained Martin Rogall. The recyclate has to be made of LDPE, Low Density Polyethylene. This is a soft plastic that is mainly used for bags. “So far, there is only a small, fluctuating market for this type of plastic in Bangalore. There are few buyers for LDPE and those that do exist purchase the material inconsistently. The fluctuating price often does not make it worth the effort to gather the waste, so there is little incentive to collect this type of plastic,”. With Vishuddh Recycle, a reliable buyer for LDPE is now entering the market, which will make collecting this type of waste more lucrative in the long term.

The LDPE is processed in an industrial hall in Bangalore. “We have converted and expanded a hall of about 4,000 square metres, which was previously used as a warehouse, for the production of plastic granulate,” explained Ashutosh Singh, Managing Director of ‘Vishuddh Recycle Pvt. Ltd.’. There, the LDPE is first sorted to ensure that only pure materials go into the machine. The sorted material is then shredded into fragments measuring around 30 millimetres. Then it is cleaned and dried in a washing plant that recirculates the used water. After that the shreds are heated and filtered in a regranulation plant to remove any residues such as printing inks. The granulate is finally discharged through a hot pelletizer and packed in so-called big bags.

Plastics from Bangalore will be used in Swirl® and handy bag® bin liners

The big bags are transported in shipping containers to Poland, where the granulate is used to produce bin liners. “We are aware that the granulate has to travel long distances. Nevertheless, this is still worthwhile because the eco-balance of the plastic is significantly improved through reuse. The recycled granulate is significantly more ecological than virgin material and therefore a good alternative for our bin liner production. Above all, we ensure that the recycled material from the plant in Bangalore is purchased and that guarantees the long-term stability of the multi-faceted social business there,” explained Martin Rogall, Chief Sustainability Officer at Cofresco.

“Fair Recycled Plastic is a very important milestone in Cofresco and the Melitta Group's commitment to sustainability. We are very proud of this but we will not be resting on our laurels yet; we want to build on this commitment in the future,” said Oliver Strelecki, Managing Director of Cofresco.

Further information on the commitment to sustainability at the Melitta Group and Cofresco is available at melitta-group.com/sustainability.

The Melitta Group

Melitta is an internationally operating group of companies and is one of the leading independent family businesses, both in Germany and abroad. Its main activities are the development, manufacture and sale of branded products for the enjoyment of coffee, for the storage and preparation of food, and for cleanliness in the home. As a company with a history spanning more than 100 years, the Melitta Group thinks long term and sees the pursuit of sustainable development as an integral part of all its business activities. More information can be found at www.melitta-group.com.

Cofresco Frischhalteprodukte GmbH & Co.KG

Cofresco Frischhalteprodukte GmbH & Co. KG, a company in the Melitta Group, is Europe's leading manufacturer of branded products in the household foil and paper sector for the home and professional kitchen. With its Toppits®, Handy Bag®, BacoFoil® and Swirl® brands, products from this innovative business unit can be found on supermarket shelves in nearly all European countries. Cofresco is also a leader in the food service sector with its Caterwrap® and Wrapmaster® brands. As a plastics processing company, Cofresco optimises its own use of raw materials and follows the principle of the circular economy. The entire product portfolio will be fully part of a circular economy by 2025. Find out more at www.cofresco.de.

Yunus Social Business Fund gGmbH

Yunus Social Business (YSB) is based on the ideas of Nobel Peace Prize laureate Prof. Muhammad Yunus to solve global problems through the power of business. The Yunus Fund team transforms donations into investments that support sustainable social enterprises active in the areas agriculture & livelihood security, education and training, energy and the environment, and health and sanitation. With a portfolio spanning Brazil, Colombia, India, Kenya and Uganda, YSB Funds has positively impacted over 3.6 million lives worldwide. The Corporate Innovation team works with global corporations to empower them to become a force for good. By developing social business models, building social ventures and engaging in social intrapreneurship, the Corporate Innovation Team paves strategic paths for companies to align business goals and impact. YSB has its headquarters in Berlin, Germany, and has more than 10 years of experience in the field of mission-driven business.