

Unilever, Industry Partners Advance Paper-Based Flexible Packaging

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The consortium aims to support research and development (R&D) partnerships focused on flexible packaging solutions



Unilever and other global consumer goods companies have joined forces through the PaperFlex Consortium to accelerate the development of responsibly designed, paper-based flexible packaging alternatives to conventional plastic packaging.

Convened by the Ellen MacArthur Foundation and powered by (RE)SET, the consortium aims to support research and development (R&D) partnerships focused on flexible packaging solutions for markets where such packaging is widely used but formal collection and recycling infrastructure remains limited.

The initiative seeks to develop paper-based flexible packaging that can be recycled as collection and recycling systems improve, while also exploring biodegradable solutions for packaging that unintentionally enters the environment.

Unilever is a founding member of the consortium, alongside five other global consumer goods manufacturers. According to Pablo Costa, Global Head of Packaging, the companies identified an opportunity to address shared technical challenges through collaboration rather than pursuing separate R&D efforts.

Flexible packaging presents significant technical challenges, particularly for food and consumer products, as materials need to protect products, preserve shelf life, withstand complex supply chains and operate efficiently on high-speed manufacturing lines.

The PaperFlex Consortium will collaborate on the development and testing of paper-based packaging technologies, including trials designed to assess product protection, shelf life, consumer usability and performance on manufacturing lines.

The consortium builds on findings from the Ellen MacArthur Foundation's Paper-Based Flexible Packaging report, which highlighted the gap between currently available technologies and the industry's ambition for recyclable and compostable flexible packaging.

By coordinating R&D activities, consortium members aim to reduce duplication, accelerate the development of promising technologies and support their eventual scale-up. The initiative is also intended to help businesses respond to emerging

packaging regulations across global markets.