

The STOPP project, to produce strategies for food plastic packaging circularity

- *This project aims to create the basis for a new food packaging value chain based on the “5 Rs”: Refuse, Reduce, Redesign, Reuse and Recycle.*
- *The project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe program and the Swiss State Secretariat for Education, Research, and Innovation (SERI).*

Tampere, January 25, 2024. STOPP, an initiative co-funded by SIRE and the European Union (within the framework of the research and innovation programme Horizon Europe) to promote sustainable food packaging use and reduce plastic waste and environmental impact has just kicked off.

STOPP looks for a significant reduction of the environmental impact derived from the use of plastics in food packaging in line with the EU's Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive, with ambitious goals to cut down on packaging waste by 2030. The project will involve all the links in the food packaging value chain, from the plastic or the agri-food industry to the end users, the food retail industry, or policymakers.

STOPP will create circular strategies for plastic usage and processing. It will also generate awareness campaigns within a multi-actor network that involves profiles from every stage of the food packaging value chain. Some of its specific actions will be:

- To analyse the impact of plastic waste in different ecosystems.
- To monitor the current use of plastics in the food packaging industry.
- To create a sustainable business model that can be replicated.
- To take actions that enhance recycling.
- Conducting a customer voice study.

STOPP will lead Europe's transition into a more sustainable usage of food packaging that keeps food safety standards. For 36 months, fourteen partners from seven countries will closely collaborate to maximize the project efforts and results. The project outcomes are meant to set a basis for the European decision-making process towards plastic usage in the food value chain and are in line with the European Green Deal.



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Plastic waste: a challenge in need of solutions in Europe

Plastic Recyclers Europe estimated that almost 10 million tonnes of polypropylene and high-density polyethylene, the most common plastics used for food packaging, can end up being wasted in only one year. This problem can be fixed by creating sustainable and smart ways of plastic usage along the value chain as, although the situation is improving, there is space for improvement. As an example, many companies are awarding their customers if they reuse packaging, but there are still many that don't do so. Another specific problem that isn't usually perceived as that is the consumer's attitudes towards their own recycling attitudes. Most of the studies are based on self-reported practices, and these often offer limited insight into real-life actions and can be biased, especially concerning socially desirable behaviours such as recycling. Good practices among the companies involved in the food value chain need to be improved, as well as it is needed a better understanding of the customers' real-life attitudes and routines.

About STOPP

STOPP is a collaborative initiative that aims to revolutionise the food packaging value chain by promoting circular and sustainable solutions. It is led by VTT, and its consortium is formed by the University of Vaasa, the National Institute of Chemistry of Slovenia, the National Institute of Biology of Slovenia, ReMONDIS Recycling, HSY (Helsinki Region Environmental Services), GreenDelta, Sustainable Innovations, Plastics Recyclers Europe, Ekokumppanit, Pirkanmaan Jätehuolto, Veolia, Braskem, and reCIRCLE. STOPP has received a grant of €3,998,452.00 from the Horizon Europe research and innovation programme of the European Union.

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