

European retail steps up the fight against waste in drive to green the economy

Despite the economic woes, the European retail industry remains committed to achieving more sustainable production and consumption. Grocery stores are going to assist customers in cutting back on food waste. Non-food retailers will focus on making the waste stream of textiles and electronics more sustainable.

These new initiatives of 17 retail companies and two retail associations¹ are presented today to the European Commissioner for the environment, Janez Potočnik who will welcome them as a real contribution to the greening of the economy.

Although retail contributes very little to waste directly, the sector recognises that it is a major environmental problem. In response to this, retailers are committed to organising two awareness-raising campaigns on waste reduction on a global and/or national level by June 2014.

Dame Lucy Neville-Rolfe, President of EuroCommerce said: "This commitment shows that retailers are encouraging customers to adopt more sustainable lifestyles. With incomes under pressure, our challenge is to make the green choice an easy one for consumers and to support them in reducing waste."

Dick Boer, President of the European Retail Round Table, said: "We are on the right track in making the economy greener, but it is important to keep up the momentum. As some of the largest retail companies in Europe, we are determined to push forward in encouraging our customers to live more sustainably, in collaborating with our suppliers to make production more responsible, and in further reducing the environmental footprint of our own businesses."

Today's Retail Forum annual event (REAP) includes a number of lively panel discussions with cooperation of European Commissioner for the environment, Janez Potočnik, and an exhibition hosted by REAP members. At stands, participants will be able to see first-hand how the various initiatives on resource efficiency will operate in stores. EuroCommerce and ERRT will also unveil the 2012 REAP annual report, proving once again their long term commitment to sustainability.

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¹ ASDA, AUCHAN, COLRUYT GROUP, DELHAIZE GROUP, EI CORTE INGLES, EROSKI, IKEA, KAUF LAND, LIDL, MARK & SPENCER GROUP, MERCADONA, MERCATOR, METRO GROUP, REWE GROUP, ROYAL AHOLD, SONAE, TESCO, APED, EUROCOOP

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About the Retail Forum and the Retailers' Environmental Action Programme

The Retail Forum for sustainability is an initiative of the Directorate-General for environment of the European Commission and the European retail industry. Membership of the Retail Forum is open to all retailers who join the Retailers' Environmental Action Programme (REAP). REAP members commit themselves every year to ambitious and specific environmental targets.

The Retail Forum was set up in 2009 in order to exchange best practices on sustainability in the European retail sector and to identify opportunities and barriers that may further or hinder the achievement of sustainable production and consumption. Since its inception, the following topics have been addressed: energy efficiency of stores, optimisation of distribution systems, marketing and effective communications, timber, environmental life cycle information for consumer products, the measurement and reduction of carbon footprint of stores, labelling, packaging optimisation and sustainable seafood.

The Retail Forum is co-chaired by the European Commission, EuroCommerce and the ERRT.

EuroCommerce and the commerce sector

EuroCommerce represents the retail, wholesale and international trade sectors in Europe. Its membership includes commerce federations and companies in 31 European countries.

Commerce plays a unique role in the European economy, acting as the link between manufacturers and the nearly 500 million consumers across Europe over a billion times a day. It is a dynamic and labour-intensive sector, generating 11% of the EU's GDP. One company out of three in Europe is active in the commerce sector. Over 99% of the 6 million companies in commerce are small and medium-sized enterprises. It also includes some of Europe's most successful companies. The sector is a major source of employment creation: 33 million Europeans work in commerce, which is one of the few remaining job-creating activities in Europe. It also supports millions of dependent jobs throughout the supply chain from small local suppliers to international businesses. www.eurocommerce.be

European Retail Round Table (ERRT)

ERRT brings together the CEOs of Europe's multinational retail companies who share their collective experience and ideas with policy makers in view of giving Europe's consumers better access to the benefits of the Single Market and to promote delivery of a sustainable consumption model.

Collectively, ERRT members have a turnover of more than €400 billion and employ 2.3 million people in over 40,000 stores. ERRT Members are: Asda Walmart, C&A, Carrefour Group, Delhaize Group, El Corte Inglés, H&M, IKEA, Inditex, Marks & Spencer, Mercadona, Metro Group, Royal Ahold and Tesco. www.errt.org