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TIMCON President says government reuse incentive is a must after latest missed climate targets

The Timber Packaging & Pallet Confederation (TIMCON) says discussions with DEFRA on the implementation of a reuse incentive scheme for wooden packaging have been "extremely positive".

The organisation, together with other wood product associations, have been campaigning for a reuse initiative with two central aims: to maximise the reuse of wooden pallets and packaging in supply chains and support the development of a circular economy.

The Scottish government this week cancelled its target of reducing greenhouse gases by 75 per cent by 2030, having missed eight of its last 12 annual

climate goals. It is the latest organisation to soften flagship environmental objectives, with both the Conservative and Labour party having made U-turns on key policies in the past year.

TIMCON President John Dye said incentivising reuse was now a must to help maintaining progress towards net zero and sending out the positive messages to the UK public.

[continued on page 2](#)

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continued from page 1

TIMCON has collaborated with other wood-based sectors and submitted a proposal to DEFRA to introduce a workable reuse framework as part of a Proposed Reuse Incentive Scheme document. The document has two goals: to maximise the number of times wooden packaging is reused before, ultimately, it is recycled; and to increase the use of wooden transport tools – including pallets, cases, crates, cable reels, and so on – in domestic and international supply chains.

The reuse framework includes information on how reuse should be incentivised, measured, and recorded; how supply chain users can recognise a reuseable pallet; how to ensure pallets are recycled at the end of their useful life; where obligations for reuse lie; and several other recommendations.

Dye said: “In our proposed Reuse Incentive Scheme we have set out a workable framework for reusing wooden pallets and packaging and shown how this can be implemented. We are strongly recommending that government progresses this straightforward, easy-to-implement initiative to support its plans to reduce greenhouse gases by 100 per cent by 2050.

“Our recent discussions with DEFRA on when and how such a scheme can be implemented have been extremely positive.

“Wood packaging material (WPM) manufacturing and repair businesses are inherently founded on principles of circularity. They manufacture products from sustainably managed trees, which means for every one that is harvested, more are grown in their place.

“They then repair and reuse pallets until they are ready to be recycled into other products – from chipboard to animal bedding. Their business model is sustainable from start to finish.

“Encouraging these industries will, in turn, boost demand for tree planting, provide a solid foundation for our circular economy, and make a sizeable contribution to achieving the government’s 2050 targets.”



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Reusing supply chain pallets essential to sustainability goals, says NAPD Chair

The Chairman of the National Association of Pallet Distributors (NAPD) has called for supply chain businesses to ensure they have a 'reuse first' policy in place for pallets.

As new legislation will be introduced in the UK and EU in 2024, environmental reporting will be mandatory for large businesses and is expected for SMEs by 2026. NAPD Chairman Paul Tait said the many companies that supply products such as food, drink, and pharmaceuticals can make the transition more straightforward by reusing their pallets, which will cut the carbon impact of their supply chains.

"Reuse is a central part of a circular economy and enables businesses to make sizeable savings in their emissions and move closer towards their increasing sustainability obligations," said Tait. "Wooden pallets are a naturally sustainable product and companies that reuse them in their supply chains extend the environmental benefits further."

Used pallets are exempt from packaging waste regulations, so businesses using them also cut down

administration and cost.

Saleh Hijazi, press officer for NAPD, said: "With regulations including the Sustainability Disclosure Standards (SDS) and Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) in the UK, and CSRD in Europe, coming into force in the months ahead, it's imperative that everyone involved in goods supply chains works together to mitigate environmental impact and make businesses greener."

"Sustainability-focused strategies for supply chains are no longer a 'nice-to-have'; they are essential to meeting legislative obligations and the demands of our customers."

NAPD is the UK association for companies that repair pallets for reuse to a high standard. Its members are bound by a code of conduct and provide additional supply chain services to customers.



Growing pallet pooler makes senior appointment

One of Europe's leading pallet pooling specialists has made a new appointment to support its ongoing growth.

IPP, which specialises in pooling sustainable wooden pallets, has appointed Sarah Mercer to the role of business programme director at its UK office in Coventry.

Sarah brings 16 years' experience in customer service and operations management to IPP, having previously held roles at TNT/FedEx and RS Components.

Her experience covers every aspect of the customer journey, from the point of opportunity to billing and everything in between.

Sarah said: "My role as business programme director focuses on all aspects of the business, including process, people, and technology."

"Around 70 per cent of my time is spent planning for the future of IPP and ensuring our business is fit for future growth; the other 30 per cent is spent supporting our teams with project and change initiatives."

"There is always an opportunity to improve when using data, facts, experiences, new information, products or responding to customer demand; customer expectations are always changing, and we need to stay

ahead to remain competitive.

"When introducing best practice and standardising processes, it is really important to me that we bring the entire workforce on the journey with us to give us the best chance of sustainable change."

"Building diverse project teams with different backgrounds, experiences and insight will help us to really make a difference to our business."

"There is a great sense of satisfaction when you see a project team's effort translate into happy employees, improved service and fulfilled customers."

Shelley Pierre, commercial director at IPP, said: "IPP is undergoing a period of rapid growth in the UK, so it is essential that our business and our people are fully equipped and prepared for the supply chain industry of the future."

"Sarah is a valuable addition to the IPP team, and her skills and knowledge are vital as we continue to improve and invest in the customer experience and in our team."





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ATZ-Motion is the official UK and Ireland distributor of Pneumatico, a leading manufacturer of pallet assembly and repair tables. The range includes Pneumatico's flagship products, such as the PT Series pallet assembly system, and the WT2 pallet repair table, which are used by companies across the world.



The Pallet Assembly table is ergonomically designed for making 2-way, 4-way, EURO, chemical and custom pallets using blocks or stringers. The simplicity of the system means the operator can switch to manufacturing different pallet types quickly and easily. On average a single operator can manufacture 200 pallets during a typical 8-hour shift.

The PT Series features three models, the PT-1900, PT-2800 and PT-3300, the number of each denoting the maximum pallet size that can be produced on each system.

It is easy to change the configuration of the pallet assembly table to make different pallet types. This gives businesses opportunities to honour smaller orders and produce custom pallets not suited to automated lines or simple workbenches.

The Pneumatico WT2 pallet repair table is used for the repair of EURO, EPAL, CHEP and pallets of equivalent sizes. The workbench was developed to make repairing pallets quick and safe by introducing features which aid greatly in the nailing, rotating, and flipping of the pallet.

The table has a central role to play in the sustainability of pallet using businesses, facilitating repair and re-introduction of used pallets back into the marketplace, and helping to reduce high demand for costly new timber.

As pallet making and repairing is a labour-intensive process, Pneumatico has concentrated on creating ergonomic products which make handling, manoeuvring, and nailing pallets as effortless as possible.

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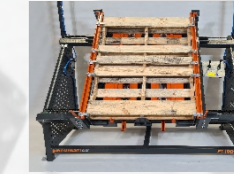
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Reuse and reward



As the world grapples with the urgent need to address climate change, the importance of exploring many varied routes towards sustainability is growing fast.

The Scottish government's decision to backtrack on its greenhouse gas reduction targets is the latest disappointment in a series of major political U-turns on the environment, which have highlighted that the world has much further to go and much more to do when it comes to slowing the impact of climate change.

The Timber Packaging & Pallet Confederation (TIMCON) have collaborated closely with other industry sectors to highlight the pressing need to incorporate reuse of wooden packaging into government policy as a straightforward way to move the UK closer to its net zero goals. We have engaged DEFRA on this issue, who have been extremely receptive to our shared proposals for a reuse incentive scheme, which aim to maximise reuse of wooden pallets and packaging. If this extremely encouraging response is followed by similarly positive action, we could soon see a reuse initiative in place, taking a step towards greater circularity in supply chains that couldn't be more timely.

The proposed Reuse Incentive Scheme outlines a framework that will maximise the lifespan of

pallets and other wooden packaging material, minimising supply chain waste and increasing efficiency overall. It includes aspects such as incentivisation, measurement, recognition of reusable pallets, and end-of-life recycling obligations.

Of course, forest-based industries such as wooden packaging already work to inherent principles of circularity, sourcing materials from sustainability managed forests, and maximising their useful lifespan before they are recycled into other products. Supporting these sectors with progressive legislation helps increase demand for tree planting and lays the groundwork for a robust circular economy.

In addition to this, embracing reuse isn't just environmentally sound, it's economically prudent. Extending the lifespan of wooden packaging materials helps businesses reduce procurement costs and, by reducing material use and the number of repair trips, minimise their carbon footprint. This helps businesses achieve their own climate goals and contributes to the country's overall performance in this area, too.

Prioritising initiatives such as the Reuse Incentive Scheme is no longer optional, it is a necessity, and TIMCON will be continue work with stakeholders and policymakers to help define and roll these out, in the best interests of our membership, the country, and the planet.

John Dye President

Timber Packaging & Pallet Confederation (TIMCON)

Britvic reaffirms partnership with LPR

LPR-La Palette Rouge (a division of Euro Pool Group), the European pallet pooling specialist, has announced that Britvic has once again chosen it as its pallet pooler of choice for a further four years.

Britvic is a leading supplier of branded still soft drinks in Great Britain, producing brand names including Robinsons, Tango, and J2O, as well as Pepsi, 7UP, and more under license from PepsiCo.

A statement by LPR said: "In a partnership that began in 2020, LPR demonstrated that it was able to roll out the implementation at pace and in line with expectations, whilst meeting unprecedented demand during the COVID 19 pandemic.

"In addition, LPR used its extensive expertise in the beverage sector to ensure that Britvic was able to achieve the substantial cost savings identified during the tender process."

The company says it has rolled out the use of HVO-powered tractor units, as well as larger trailers, which together offer a 90 per cent reduction in the level of CO2 gasses created. This initiative led to a total saving of 27,732kg of CO2 between May 2023 and February 2024, supporting the strategic partnering and sustainability targets of both businesses.

Charlie Judge, Network Collaboration Manager at Britvic, said: "The implementation of the move to LPR was managed in a faultless way, which meant that we were able to focus on our day-to-day business. The excellent pallet quality reduced our automation downtime, and pallets were delivered when, and where, we needed them".

Simon Boyd, Customer Account Manager at LPR UK & Ireland, said: "The level of partnership that I've experienced working with Britvic really has been exceptional. Their focus on sustainability is very much aligned with that of LPR, so identifying greener ways of working has been a collaborative effort."



Richard Greeves, Supply Chain Operations and Ireland Lead at Britvic, added: "Our customer account manager Simon understands the complexity of the Britvic business, working closely with us to help us achieve our goals – the decision to stay with LPR was a straightforward one".

Adrian Fleming, Regional Director LPR North, said: "It is always heartening to hear that a business such as Britvic has once again selected LPR as its pallet pooler, and I look forward to seeing what we can achieve working together for the next four years.

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Change and challenge in the international packaging industry

By John Giles, Divisional Director, Promar International



The UK and international food and drink packaging industry is undergoing significant change, as is the rest of the supply chain. This is being driven by a multitude of factors, including increasing consumer demand for sustainable packaging and increased material costs.

As an example, based on work carried out by Promar International for the National Farmers Union last year, packaging costs in the horticultural sector have increased over the last 2 years by 25 per cent alone. It is difficult to assess these increased costs on to hard pressed customers, but at some stage, something must give, surely? No one wants to pass on increased costs if at all possible, but without this, companies will look more and more vulnerable and the whole concept of our supply chain security become more debatable.

Add to this, disruption in international supply chains and the changing route to market for many agrifood and drink products because of growing influence of ecommerce, all makes for a heady cocktail of influences that will see only the most resilient players in the sector survive, let alone thrive.

Most, if not all, companies in the food and drink sector are committing themselves to meet ambitious net zero targets over the next ten to 20 years. This is being driven by the demands of the leading retailers to meet their own sustainability objectives and now the introduction of legislation on recording of actions being undertaken to mitigate against the impact of climate change for larger companies.

Going forwards, while it appears that smaller packaging businesses will initially remain out of scope, they are still likely to be indirectly affected if they do business with larger companies

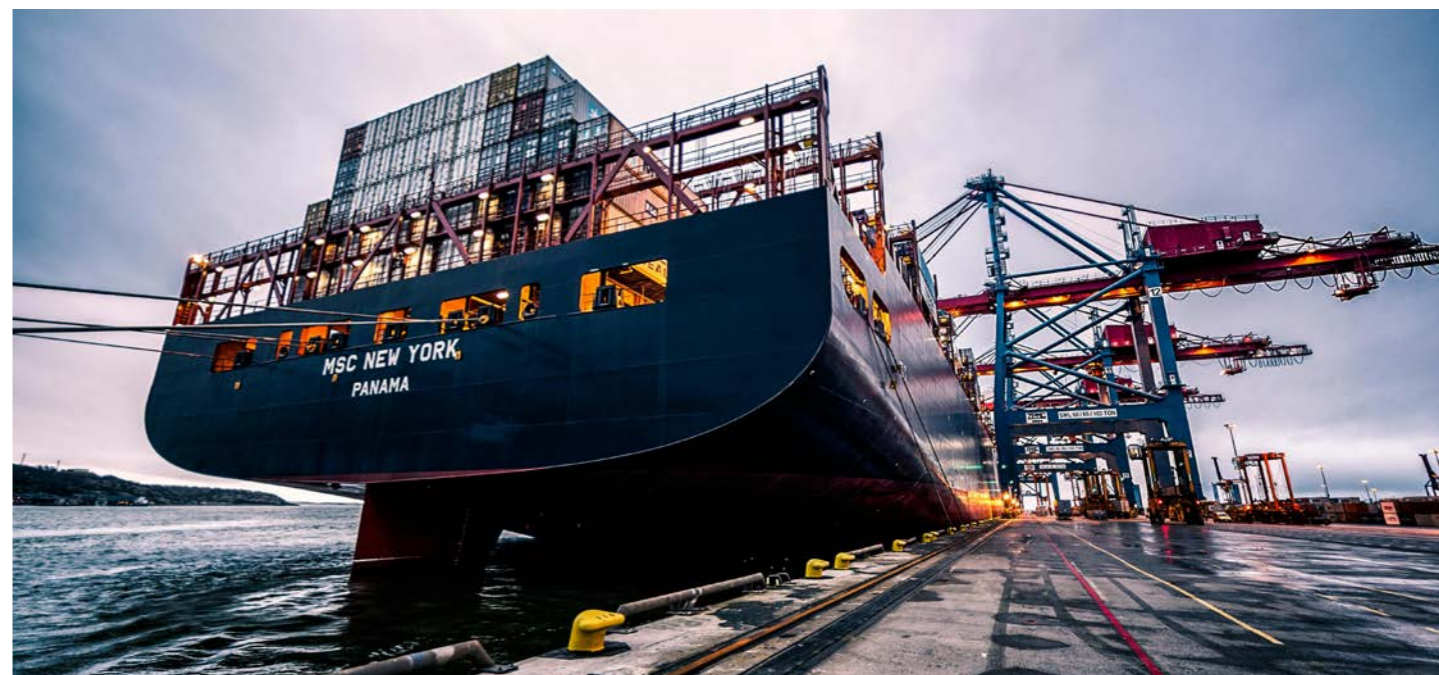
because of the requirement for supply chain due diligence. Companies within scope of the reporting requirements will be required to identify, assess, prevent, mitigate, and remedy any negative impacts on people and the planet, including those of their upstream and downstream partners, such as those involved in production, packaging, supply, transport and storage, design and distribution.

As a result, sustainability as an issue remains a top priority for food and drink packaging. On a recent Promar B2B agrifood research project, it was referred to as being “the only game in town”.

If only it were.

It is not at all unreasonable though to expect more food and drink companies to adopt more sustainable practices, such as using recyclable and food-grade recycled materials, reducing packaging waste, and implementing initiatives to minimise their carbon footprint. Consumers are also increasingly seeking out products and brands that prioritise sustainability, driving the need for innovative packaging solutions that are both eco-friendly and functional.

Balancing sustainability with costs remains a significant challenge for the food and drinks packaging industry. While sustainable packaging may incur higher upfront expenses, there is a huge body of evidence to suggest that companies that embrace sustainability also end up being more profitable.



This is often because they use less energy, including the use of renewable energies, look to reduce waste, and make use of new supply chains solutions in food tech and blockchain applications.

Using more tech in the drive to counter increased costs in a bid to be more efficient is one way forward, but there are a range of other factors at play too.

Packaging is also an international industry with the largest players operating on a global basis and serving global customers. Disruption to supply chains can therefore have a big impact. During the height of the COVID pandemic, freight costs and routings were all over the place.

It took almost two years for these to recover to anywhere near what might be regarded as normal levels. In the meantime, there have been major problems in the Suez Canal and now the Red Sea and in the Panama Canal. These incidents all add time, cost, and complexity to the movement of goods. This at a time when in the UK, inflationary pressures in the supply chain appeared, if even only for what might be a short while, to be over the worst.

Much of the underlying causes of the volatility seen in packaging and agrifood markets in general can be traced back to a combination of Brexit, COVID, the situation in the Ukraine and now the Middle East, political and economic tensions between the US and China, and the cost of living crisis. On

top of this, the impact of climate change has been gathering pace, with the incidence of unusual weather patterns gaining momentum.

In five years' time, do we think we will be in a less volatile situation? We are already, in early 2024, seeing the highest levels of geopolitical uncertainty since the end of the war.

Maybe, in the future, we will be in a less volatile situation, but the history of supply shocks shows that they happen on average every two years. While governments and industry get to grips with the current situation, the next shock is probably already out there.

It is hard to see that the fundamental causes of this volatility are going to go away in the very near future – even the midterm. As an example, if the situation in Ukraine resolved itself in the next few weeks (and it doesn't look as if it is anywhere close to doing so) it might take two to three years for markets for energy, fertilisers and grains to stabilise.

This all means that the VUCA (volatile, uncertain, contradictory, and ambiguous) period for the food and drink sector and the packaging industry that supports it, is not going to end. This spells problems for the less well informed, the less well prepared, and those without a fundamentally well-developed business strategy. As always, the case there will be some “losers” in this situation, but for some it will also be a period of opportunity and transformation.

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