



GLASS PACKAGING FORUM RECEIVES GOVERNMENT ACCREDITATION FOR ITS PRODUCT STEWARDSHIP SCHEME

If you are buying drinks or food packaged in glass bottles or jars at New Zealand's supermarkets, four out of 5 of the glass containers on the shelves are part of a voluntary levy to help make sure each container gets recycled when it is put in the recycling bin.

Only 12% of New Zealanders know about this voluntary levy but an overwhelming 92% say they think all businesses should be taking this sort of responsibility or "product stewardship".

And this leadership has now been recognised with the Minister for the Environment's seal of approval as a voluntary product stewardship scheme under the Waste Minimisation Act 2008.

Whilst the Glass Packaging Forum was the first industry body in 2005 to introduce a levy on members who pay according to the amount of glass they manufacture or import; fill or sell in New Zealand, the Waste Minimisation Act now allows voluntary schemes to be officially recognized by Government.

John Webber, General Manager of the Glass Packaging Forum says this accreditation is an important signal to its members that their funding is allocated to projects which directly meet the criteria of the Waste Minimisation Act.

"The scheme is an extension of our work over the past five years during which time our members have raised over \$1.6 million, that has been spent on projects, research, infrastructure and educational programmes to increase glass recycling leading to a reduction in container glass to landfill."

"The glass scheme is unique in terms of packaging because it addresses the "cradle to grave" impacts of glass containers from their design through to assisting with recycling them after use. In the past year the Glass Forum has directly contributed to recycling an additional 30,000 tonnes of glass which represents 20% of all glass recycled.

In addition the scheme will during its seven year term:

- Measure the amount of glass packaging used by members and the amount of recycled glass being used;
- Target markets which have a high value for recovered glass and prioritise returning glass cullet to glass maker OI for remanufacture;
- Allocate 20% funds to consumer education and awareness including public place recycling; and
- Measure and seek to reduce the carbon footprint of glass packaging.

“The Waste Minimisation Act allows the Government to recognise those organizations which are directly influencing a reduction in waste and doing it in a voluntary way. However it is important that a level playing field is set for everyone. Schemes which are funding end of life recovery systems (whether for glass packaging, agricultural wrap or paint containers) require funds raised by members’ levies to meet the needs of “whole of life waste avoidance” and to do less would not fully cover the expectations of the Act.

“Creating new infrastructures to collect materials after use and develop new recycling markets for recovered materials requires funding. Whilst some argue this is the role of local and central government through rates and taxes, the Waste Minimisation Act requires producers to play (and pay) their part.

“At a time when all businesses are looking to reduce their costs, our members continue to pay a significant amount of money to help make sure the glass packaging which they produce is recycled and not wasted. Gaining accreditation means we can now target the companies which are currently free-riding on the back of them. By having a seven year voluntary accredited product stewardship scheme, industry is demonstrating that it can meet challenging waste minimisation targets. However this requires everyone to be in the tent. Those companies using substantial amounts of glass that are not a member of this scheme or a similar scheme which directly diverts glass packaging waste from landfill will be reported by the Glass Packaging Forum as “free riders” in the scheme’s annual report.”

“We are already funding consumer awareness programmes which promote recycling of all packaging materials and are increasingly being asked to fund public place recycling facilities. Whilst our focus is glass, the public rightly expects to be able to recycle all of their packaging at events and when out and about – not just their glass containers.”

“We expect that others will take on this responsibility as we have done so that industry can best cover all of its “product stewardship needs”. We believe we have led the way in “best cost most effective” product stewardship in leading with our glass scheme and encourage other packaging materials to follow”.

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For information

The Glass Packaging Forum’s scheme currently covers over 80% of the glass on the market in New Zealand primarily for food and beverages and includes the major manufacturer of glass containers, brand owners and retailers.