



Beverage industry needs priority access to its recycled plastic material to close the bottle loop and accelerate the transition to a more circular economy

Brussels, 14 July 2021: The non-alcoholic beverage industry, represented by the European Fruit Juice Association (AIJN), Natural Mineral Waters Europe (NMWE) and UNESDA Soft Drinks Europe, calls on the European Commission for “priority access” to its recycled plastic (PET) material, or a similar mechanism that guarantees “right of first refusal”, to be incorporated in the upcoming revision of the Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive.

As the beverage industry continues to invest in circularity and to put highly recyclable PET on the market, it needs to have priority access to its own recycled packaging material. This will help the beverage industry produce new packaging with food-grade recycled PET compliant with EU food safety standards, achieve its recycling targets **and prevent its recycled PET being downcycled**. Closing the bottle loop is required to ensure that the beverage industry meets the Single Use Plastics Directive (SUPD) targets and contributes to building a more circular economy for beverage packaging.

Wouter Lox, Secretary General of the European Fruit Juice Association (AIJN), commented: *“Food packaging serves specific needs, but most importantly is to safeguard the food products quality, conserves the food and assures food product safety. Also every food product has its specific packaging material properties and requirements in order to assure the packaging purpose. The access to the packaging material is essential to continue providing high quality and safe foods. This requirement needs to be merged with the sector commitments to respond to the EU Green Deal and the Circular Economy Action Plan. Therefore the access to the recycled material responding to the highest food quality standards needs to be reassured at every stage of the circularity circle.”*

Patricia Fosselard, Secretary General of Natural Mineral Waters Europe, stated: *“Thanks to significant investments in collection schemes and in eco-design, PET bottles have become the most collected and recycled items around Europe. Through well-designed Deposit Return Schemes, several countries already achieve collection rates above 90%. Our members are determined to give every bottle a second life, but they can only do this if they get back the material that they place on the market so we can successfully close the loop.”*

Nicholas Hodac, Director General of UNESDA, added: *“The entire beverage industry in Europe is fully supportive of the EU Green Deal and Circular Economy Action Plan and is committed to delivering full circularity for PET bottles. To get there, we need the European Commission to*

allow us to have priority access to our own recycled plastic material to meet our EU recycling obligations and avoid downcycling, which will break the bottle loop. It is just fair that we regain the equivalent quantity of collected and recycled material that we place on the market to move circularity forward.”

The beverage industry is subject to several mandatory requirements under SUPD, one of which is that PET in bottles has to be food-grade to comply with EU food safety standards. In addition to introducing mandatory collection targets for PET bottles, SUPD also mandates the beverage industry to use a minimum of 25% (by 2025) and 30% (by 2030) of recycled content. The beverage industry’s commitment is not only to achieve these EU targets, but also to go much further by creating a closed loop for its PET bottles. Granting the beverage industry fair access to the amount of PET plastic material that it puts on the market and of which it finances the collection is key to promote effective bottle-to-bottle recycling.

Note to Editors

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About the European Fruit Juice Association (AIJN)

AIJN is the representative association of the fruit juice industry in the EU. It defends the interests of the juice industry including the entire value chain and promotes the sector by engaging with the EU Institutions and other relevant stakeholders.

www.aijn.eu

About Natural Mineral Waters Europe (NMWE)

Natural Mineral Waters Europe represents almost 550 natural mineral and spring water producers in Europe, most of them small- and medium sized companies. NMWE is dedicated to promoting the unique qualities of natural mineral and spring waters as well as sustainable use of water resources and circular economy.

www.naturalmineralwaterseurope.org

About UNESDA Soft Drinks Europe

Established in 1958 UNESDA Soft Drinks Europe is a Brussels-based association representing the European soft drinks industry. Its membership includes both companies and national associations from across Europe producing drinks including still drinks, squashes, carbonates, powders, iced teas, iced coffees, syrups, energy drinks and sports drinks.

www.unesda.eu