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Market Failures Threaten PET Recycling

The PET recycling industry is threatened by persistent structural market failures across Europe.

On the one hand, the current collection infrastructures have reached their limit and the collection of PET bottles is stagnating around 50% whereas the balance of the uncollected PET is still landfilled or incinerated.

“Europe is not maximising the sustainable use of a valuable resource such as post-consumer PET” said Casper van den Dungen (Chairman of the EuPR PET Working Group). Furthermore, due to intensive lightweighting and complex bottle design the average costs of recycling have increased substantially in recent years. Such increased costs cannot currently be corrected by further economies of scale.

On the other hand, recent years have seen an increase in demand for recycled PET and this has led to a significant increase in investments in many new recycling lines. Casper van den Dungen underlined that *“the combined effect of these market failures are causing recycling plants to operate at well below 75% of their capacity”*.

In addition, a potential lifting of currently existing anti-dumping duties on virgin PET could further worsen the EU industry’s position. *“Until today, PET has been an undisputed success and example for sustainable development. It can remain so in the future if the collection moves upwards to another level and the virgin PET is fairly marketed”* according to Casper van den Dungen.

In order to boost PET resource efficiency, Europe needs a well-managed and balanced value chain.

Plastics Recyclers Europe is striving to reform the current EU PET recycling infrastructure and to improve the current imbalances - for this we will need support from other stakeholders and especially the EU institutions if the goals of the present and future EU Waste and Recycling Directives are to be achieved.

About EuPR

Plastics Recyclers Europe is the professional representative body of plastics recyclers in Europe. EuPR promotes plastics mechanical recycling and conditions that enable profitable and sustainable business, while offering a service platform to its members. EuPR members constitute 80% of the European recycling capacity, processing more than 3 million tonnes of collected plastics waste per year.

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For more information go to: www.plasticsrecyclers.eu

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