



FERVER
European Federation of Glass Recyclers
Fédération Européenne des Recycleurs de Verre

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Position paper on UVAG glass ("black" glass) and opaque coatings

Introduction

Recently there has been a troubling and increasing trend in some new products of the glass industry: the increasing production of non-transparent bottles and especially of so-called "black" glass UVAG (ultra violet adsorbing glass).

Colours of a wide variety have been used for a long time in packaging glass. Recyclers can cope with this as long as the glass is reasonably transparent. This applies to extreme dark coloured glass, UVAG, and to most of the coated or painted packaging glass products.

The international recycling industry here faces a recyclability problem.

Difficulties to recycle a recyclable material

Claiming the "100% recyclability" of an extreme dark "black" or coated (paint) glass packaging, is not always correct!

As long as this packaging glass can be kept separate from other packaging glass, it can be processed separately and remelted to make new glass products. In this specific case the claim that it is 100% recyclable is justified.

But this is only a very small volume in comparison to the millions of tons of post-consumer glass waste which is brought to the bottle bank by the conscientious and unsuspecting consumer.

Before it can be used as raw material for the production of new glass, glass waste has to pass through a sorting and recycling installation where all impurities like CSP (ceramics, stones, and porcelain), ferrous and non-ferrous metals, plastics, paper, organics, ... are extracted. The optical sorting technology is based on the principle of light transparency and reflection. Therefore all non-transparent pieces of glass will be classified as non-glass particles (CSP). The black glass and coated glass will not only be rejected from the glass stream, but it will also cause the rejection of good transparent glass particles. This means that not only the black and coated glass will be taken out of the glass recycling loop but also at least the same volume of good recyclable normal glass will never end up as a raw material for new glass again.



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Conclusion

Extremely dark (black) and coated (painted) glass is not only non-recyclable when it ends up being mixed with other glass packaging before it is processed, but it also reduces the recycling efficiency of the normal transparent packaging glass.

In the context of the new European communication on circular economy and considering the virgin image as 'perfectly recyclable' that the glass product has, it is crucial to preserve this reputation.

FERVER claims

- scrutinised practical recycling tests for recyclability in the process of existing glass recycling plants before launching new products of packaging glass
- Research supported by the glass industry to improve sorting efficiency and finally to ensure that new types/designs of glass can be efficiently sorted

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