

Summary of UNCRD, AARC & 3R WASTE Foundation Webinar on Beverage Cartons Recycling Practices and Ecosystem for a Circular Economy

The webinar on the “BEVERAGE CARTONS RECYCLING PRACTICES AND ECOSYSTEM FOR A CIRCULAR ECONOMY: SOLUTIONS, UPDATES, AND CHALLENGES” was jointly organised by UNCRD, AARC, and 3R waste foundation on Wednesday 31st May 2023. Several experts from waste management, recycling, circular economy and academicians shared their perspectives on the subject.

The webinar was attended by more than 90 participants representing Industry experts, AARC members, researchers and environment enthusiasts from seven countries.

The following experts made the presentations and discussed various issues on the subject.

1. Mr. Kamlesh Kholiya, Sustainability Manager, Tetra Pak, South Asia
2. Mr. Gunaranjan Turaga, Director, Waste Ventures, India
3. Dr. Anupam Khajuria, Researcher, UNCRD, Japan
4. Mr. Vivek Agrawal, Managing Director, Greentech Infrastructure, India
5. Dr. Anne Scheinberg, Chair, ISWA Working Group on Recycling & Waste Minimisation
6. Mr. K. D. Bhardwaj, Group Head – Environment and Energy Management & International Services National Productivity Council,
7. Dr. Praveen Aggarwal, CEO, AARC
8. Dr. N. B. Mazumdar, Chairman, International Academy of Environmental Sanitation & Public Health, India
9. Dr. Kulwant Singh, CEO, 3R WASTE Management, India

The webinar encompassed a range of topics pertaining to the recycling of Beverage Cartons, the key challenges associated with establishing an effective circular economy ecosystem, and the prevailing practices observed in countries such as Japan, Taiwan, and Korea. Dr. Kulwant Singh and Dr. N.B. Mazumdar jointly moderated the webinar.

Commencing the discussions, Mr. Kamlesh Kholiya from Tetra Pak shared his insights, shedding light on the prevailing ecosystem for recycling used cartons and providing a comprehensive overview of the steps taken by Tetra Pak in this regard. He underscored a noteworthy finding from a study conducted by IFEU, which revealed that Beverage Cartons exhibit a climate impact of 36 (kg CO₂-eq/1000 L), significantly lower compared to Glass, which possesses climate impact of 416. This indicates that Beverage Cartons serve as one of the most favourable alternatives.

Following this, Mr. Gunaranjan Turaga, Director, Waste Venture, elucidated the major challenges confronting the waste management industry. He emphasized the enduring impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the informal sector, encompassing waste collectors and segregators. Mr. Gunaranjan drew from his experiences to elucidate how the industry can enhance the income of waste-pickers and improve waste management through collaborative efforts. Furthermore, he highlighted the challenges posed by high acquisition costs, lower sale prices, and subsequently diminished profit margins, which

detrimentally affect the recyclability potential of Beverage Cartons. Dr. Mazumdar concurred with Mr. Gunaranjan's assertions, emphasizing that waste management should not be perceived as a solitary endeavour but rather as a collaborative undertaking involving all stakeholders.

Dr. Anupam Khajuria, representing the United Nations Centre for Regional Development (UNCRD) Japan, continued the dialogue by underscoring the fact that recycling constitutes just one aspect of the broader circular economy. She elucidated the various facets encompassed within this paradigm, including designing, production, distribution, consumption (use, reuse, repair), collection, and recycling. Dr. Anupam reiterated UNCRD's steadfast commitment to promoting Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) across all regional nations, extending an invitation to the UNCRD's 12th regional 3R and circular economy forum in Asia and the Pacific, scheduled to be held in Vietnam in 2024.

Dr. Anne Scheinberg further contributed to the session by emphasizing the paramount importance of the informal sector in waste management. She expressed her perspective that true recyclability of a product can only be achieved when there is a demand for the recycled product within the market. She underscored the pressing need for the beverage carton industry to actively promote and stimulate the demand for its recyclable products in order to fully realize their potential.

Dr. Vivek Agrawal, the Managing Director of Greentech Infrastructure, underscored the significance of collaborative efforts among stakeholders, including manufacturers, recyclers, and governmental bodies, to drive innovation and enhance recycling rates. He delved into various challenges encountered, including the usage of chemicals in printing ink and the need for state-of-the-art recycling technologies.

The final session was delivered by Mr. K.D. Bharadwaj, who discussed the concept of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) in India, while also shedding light on exemplary practices implemented in Taiwan, Japan, and Korea. Mr. Bharadwaj underscored the key distinctions within the EPR framework and drew attention to the foremost challenge of formalizing the informal sector in India. He recommended augmenting the roles and authorities of municipalities in EPR management.

Dr. Praveen Aggarwal, CEO of AARC thanked all the panelists to share their insightful experiences in the webinar. He reiterated the efforts made by Industry and AARC members for creating ecosystem of collecting and recycling of Beverage Cartons and ensuring the useful resources are utilized again. Dr. Aggarwal mentioned the efforts made by AARC in different states of India while assisting the Central Government in Policy formulation to handle the UBC waste in India. India today has a nationwide common EPR program and CPCB has made a progressive move to get all the data centralized. Towards the end several questions were taken up from the audience which were answered by the panelists with rich experience in the field of plastic waste management, plastic credits, EPR, circular economy, 3R and many more.