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SONAE JOINS PORTUGUESE PACT FOR PLASTIC

The initiative aims at stimulating Portugal's circular economy as far as plastic is concerned, preventing it from becoming waste

Sonae has joined the Portuguese Pact for Plastic, an initiative that aims at fostering plastic's circular economy in Portugal, preventing it from being converted into waste. This action is part of Sonae's Sustainability Policy which, among other things, prioritises the sustainable use of plastic.

Isabel Barros, Head of Sonae Companies Consulting Group, states: "Sustainability is one of Sonae's values, therefore we are committed to an active contribution to the resolution of the most urgent environmental and social challenges of our time. Proliferation of the use of single-use plastic and ineffective recycling policies contribute to a huge environmental challenge. For that reason, fostering a responsible use of plastic is one of our primary focuses. It is urgent to develop broader initiatives that allow for the development of more sustainable production, logistics and consumption processes. The Portuguese Pact for Plastics plays an important part in this process to stimulate a circular economy as far as plastic is concerned".

This pact reflects Sonae companies' commitment since, in early 2019, Sonae MC became the first Portuguese retail company to subscribe to the "New Plastics Economy Global Commitment", a pact that precedes in five years the European ambition of making 100% recyclable, reusable or compostable packages.

At Sonae MC, the incorporation of 80% recycled material in reusable carrier bags avoided the use of approximately 1.3 thousand tons of virgin plastic. In Worten's specific case, this measure will allow for a saving of around 120 tons of virgin matter. As for Salsa and Zippy, they have replaced bags and plastic envelopes in their shops for certified recycled paper bags and envelopes. MO also initiated this transition, having made reusable bags made of natural fibres available in shops.

Meanwhile, Continente developed a 100% recycled line of bin liners, incorporating the plastic that results from operations within shops and depots, which will allow for an additional saving of 740 tons of virgin plastic per year.

As far as packaging is concerned, Continente goes on developing and transforming its private label packages, so that it can be assured they are completely recyclable. For example, the change in drinking yoghurt labels allowed for the replacement of 50 tons of PVC (non-recyclable plastic) for

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PET (recyclable plastic), in a category that represents around 48 million bottles of yoghurt per year. As for the reform of packaging procedures at Sonae Fashion, it permitted a reduction of 11% plastic material used in 2019.

Sonae has encouraged a more consistent use of plastic, namely with employees and clients. Among the initiatives to fight single-use plastic is the opening of the first fruit and vegetable court on the country with a single-use-plastic free policy, put together by Sonae MC in the end of 2019. In this pilot project there aren't any plastic bags or food wrapped in plastic, with a strong incentive for clients to carry their own bags. Sonae MC has also released a range of cotton and polyester bags, a more resistant, washable and reusable alternative to single-use plastic bags, strong enough to carry up to 16 pounds of fruit and vegetables.

The establishment of partnerships with universities and research centres is another important field of action followed by Sonae companies, aiming at the development of innovative solutions.

A Pact to encourage sustainable use

Sonae is committed to providing a response to the plastic challenge, in line with the fields of action defined in its Action Policy for Plastic. This policy seeks to identify the amount and type of plastic used in operations, products and services supplied by Sonae companies and reinforce the principles of circularity. The goal is to avoid single-use plastic, eliminating the unnecessary and privileging the reuse and repair of materials. Where not possible, the goal is to ensure the correct channelling of plastic waste towards recycling.

Moreover, Sonae also intends to facilitate the recyclability of all plastic products and packages for which Sonae companies are responsible, as well to minimise the use of fossil-based virgin plastic materials. At the same time, Sonae wishes to raise communities' awareness on adopting reduce, reuse, repair and recycle behaviours.

This year, the Portuguese Pact for Plastic aims at elaborating a list of single-use plastics considered problematic or unnecessary and defining the measures for its elimination. The pact, promoted by Smart Waste Portugal, in partnership with Ellen MacArthur Foundation, wishes to ensure that 100% plastic packages are reusable, recyclable or compostable.

Recycling is a constant concern. For that reason, the goal of at least 70% effectively recycled plastic package goal has been established, which makes for an increase of collecting and recycling. On average, we wish to incorporate 30% recycled plastic in the new packages.

The Pact also aims at fostering education, namely through fostering – both current and potential – consumers' awareness and providing educational activities for the circular use of plastic.



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