

Single Use Plastics (SUP) Directive – briefing notes (24.09.19)

What is the SUP?

In June 2019, a new EU Directive was published to help protect land and marine environments, reduce littering and improve human health. The mandate — Directive (EU) 2019/904 on the reduction of the impact of certain plastic products on the environment (Single-Use Plastics Directive, or the Directive) — introduces measures to prevent and reduce the impact of certain plastic products and promote transition to a circular economy. The measures adopted will be a combination of bans, tariffs and consumption reduction targets which National Governments will be obliged to implement.

What is the definition of an SUP product?

Paper packaging is NOT specifically mentioned in the directive. However, if a packaging structure is formed using a combination of a paper layer and plastic layer, under specific qualifying conditions, it might be subject to some of the rules.

The directive specifically states the products within its scope as being made wholly or partly from plastic that is not conceived, designed and placed on the market to accomplish within its lifecycle multiple trips or rotations by being returned to a producer for refill or re-used for the same purpose for which it was conceived.

A plastic is defined as a material consisting of a polymer within the meaning of Article 3(5) of regulation (EC) No 1907/2006 to which additives or other substances may have been added, and which can function as a main structural component of final products but with the exception of natural polymers that have not been chemically modified.

What products manufactured by ECMA converters fall into the SUP scope?

Primarily boxes and clamshells made from board/plastics combinations featuring an inner plastics barrier layer and/or a window (such as for sushi or burgers). Tobacco packaging (cigarette filters)

What measures will the SUP use to reduce consumption?

- Consumption reduction targets – National governments to implement measures to enable sustained reduction in SUP (including coated cartons)
- Restrictions placing some defined SUP's on the market - bans on certain products (no carton products included)
- Requirements for Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) – based on the principle that the polluter (i.e. the manufacturer) pays full cost for clear up. This cost includes awareness raising of the products, cost for waste collection in public system, including infrastructure and its operations (inc subsequent transport and treatment) and the cost to clean up litter from those products, its transport and treatment.
- All SUP packaging will require labelling on how recyclable the product is. Important we ensure coated cartons are labelled as recyclable.

When does it come into effect?

The SUP directive has already become law and over the next 18 months, consultations will be held reference the implementation prior to National Governments being obliged to act in all areas during 2021