

UNDERSTANDING ALUMINIUM FOIL RECYCLING IN THE UK

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY | 2024



THE ALUMINIUM PACKAGING
RECYCLING ORGANISATION

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INTRODUCTION

Alupro commissioned Resource Futures to undertake a piece of research to better understand the key barriers to increased capture and recycling rates for aluminium foil packaging in the UK.

Aluminium foil packaging is widely recyclable, however there is limited reliable data on the quantity of foil packaging placed on the market (POM), capture through kerbside collection systems, recycling of such packaging and end user practices. As packaging Extended Producer Responsibility (pEPR) and Deposit Return Schemes (DRS) roll out across the UK, this lack of knowledge of the life cycle of aluminium foil packaging creates uncertainty for actors in the value chain.

The findings in this report have been developed through desktop literature review, a nationwide survey of 2001 UK residents, detailed waste composition analysis, a review of 16 local authority communications activities and interviews with 15 foil value chain and local authority stakeholders.

EXAMPLES OF OUR BEHAVIOUR CHANGE CAMPAIGNS



KEY FINDINGS:

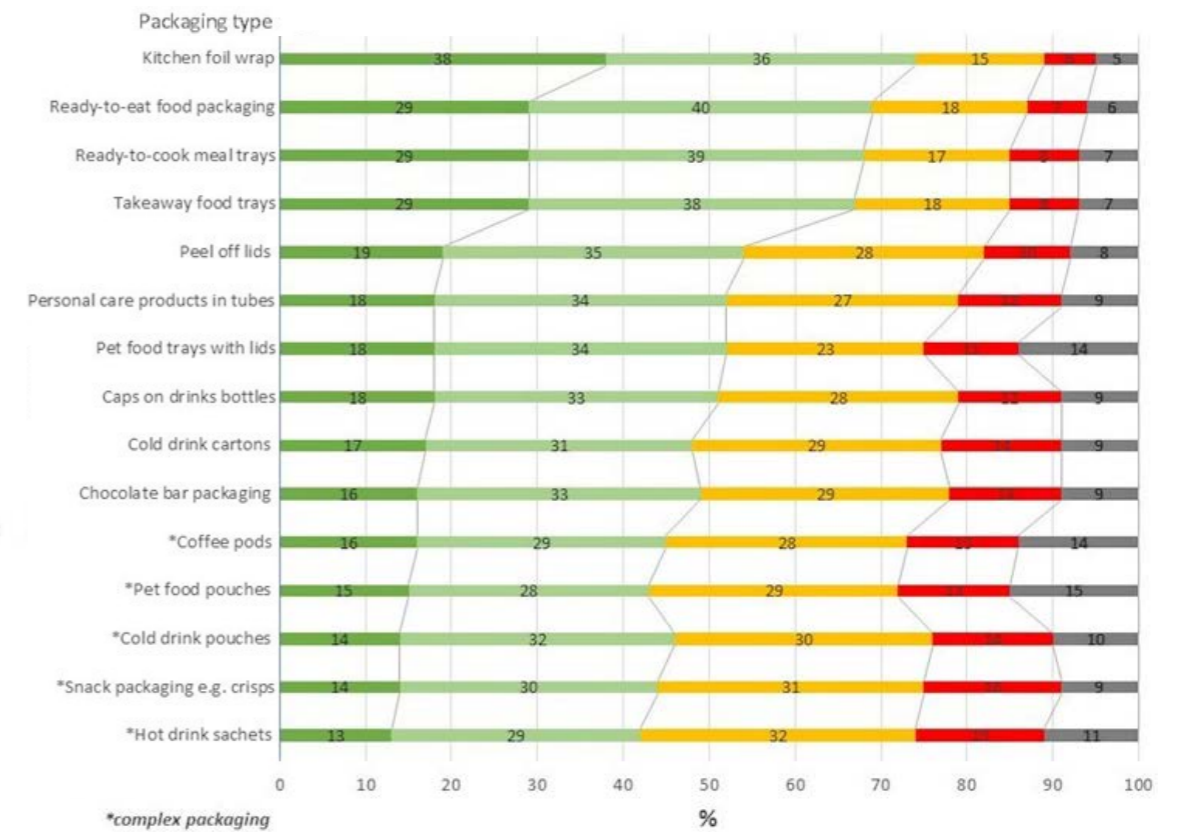
- Consumers are consistently confused and in need of significant education on how to correctly recycle foil packaging.
 - Consumers struggle to identify foil packaging from material that either looks like foil, or contains foil, such as composite material.
 - Consumers regularly 'wishcycle' composite materials and at the same time don't recycle foil packaging regularly. If consumers are in any doubt about foil packaging it will be disposed of through the residual waste stream.
 - Consumers need clear instructional messaging on how they should present different foil packaging formats for recycling.
- On pack labelling itself is not sufficient at present to push up capture rates, binary labelling will help, but not fix the problem entirely.
- Information provided by local authorities varied across the studied areas; consumer understanding would benefit from consistent messaging.
- Contamination is a continued issue, and one that could be addressed through education.
- A lack of granular data makes it difficult to determine the tonnage Placed On the Market (POM).

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Consistent and clear communication with consumers is key. Consumers must be provided with the information they need to make the correct decision at the point of disposal. Consumers must understand the wide variety of foil packaging formats that they can find around their home, as well as how they need to be cleaned and prepared for recycling. On-pack labelling, local authority communications and behaviour change initiatives, such as MetalMatters and #FoilFriday, if widely adopted, will promote best practice behaviours to consumers. This will divert valuable aluminium from the residual waste stream into the recycling stream, reducing contamination.
- Government must ensure that data collected through pEPR is clearer on POM and Recycling/Capture rate tonnages. This will enable the calculation of a true baseline for foil recycling rates and allow ongoing assessment of the impact of our interventions.
- The aluminium packaging and recycling value chain must focus on the technical and infrastructure challenges identified to improving recycling performance for aluminium foil.

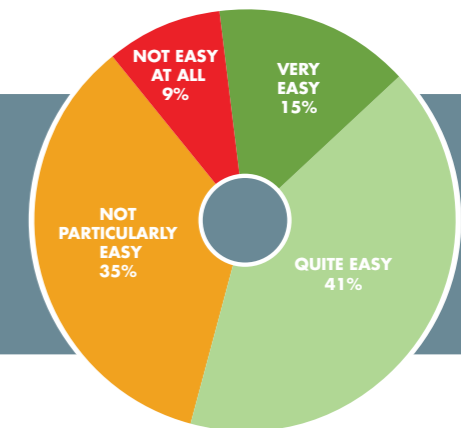
SURVEY RESULTS FOR Q2.

How confident, if at all, are you that you can identify when the following packaging types are made from aluminium?



SURVEY RESULTS FOR Q4

How easy, if at all, do you find determining whether packaging is made from aluminium foil or not, from the on-pack recycling labels?



ALUMINIUM FOIL RECYCLING INFORMATION & CAPTURE RATES FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES

LOCAL AUTHORITY	WEBSITE	SPECIFIES 'CLEAN'	LEAFLET	CAPTURE RATE - ALUMINIUM FOIL*
A	✓	✗	✓	26%
B	✓	✓	✗	15%
C	✓	✓	✓	8%
D	✓	✗	✗	15%
E	✓	✓	✗	15%
F	✗	✗	✗	31%
G	✓	✓	✓	11%
H	✓	✓	✗	12%
I	✓	✗	✓	10%
J	✓	✓	✗	1%
K	✓	✗	✗	51%
L	✓	✗	✓	50%
M	✓	✓	✗	7%
N	✓	✓	✗	2%
O (WCA 1)	✓	✗	✗	13.5%
P (WCA 2)	NOT REVIEWED			23.9%
Q (WCA 3)	✓	✓	✗	20.8%

A SUMMARY OF THE KEY FINDINGS FOR EACH LOCAL AUTHORITY
The colour coding represents the following in relation to capture rate:



* Capture rate is defined as the weight of recyclable material collected for recycling (not including contaminants) divided by the weight of all recyclables in the waste stream.

Alupro has worked for many years to highlight the benefits of aluminium foil as a packaging material; to engage the UK population with instructional messages about foil recycling and to raise the overall amount of foil captured for recycling. Through our MetalMatters, Foil in Love with Recycling and #FoilFriday campaigns we have worked with hundreds of councils and directly engaged with millions of households.

If you produce, fill, sort or recycle aluminium foil packaging, we would like to hear from you. Please get in touch and join us on the journey.



ABOUT ALUPRO

Alupro is an industry funded, not-for-profit organisation with over 30 years' experience representing the UK's aluminium packaging industry, including raw material suppliers, rollers, converters, brands and recyclers/exporters.

We work to fulfil the industry's obligation to meet, and exceed, recycling targets for aluminium packaging in the most cost-effective way.

We are achieving this by working in partnership with local authorities, the waste management industry and the wider metal packaging sector to develop and stimulate the UK's recycling collection infrastructure. We also manage and run consumer information and education campaigns to encourage participation in recycling schemes, including Every Can Counts and MetalMatters.

There are over 97,000 people employed across the UK aluminium industry and Alupro members are providing jobs and opportunities in nearly every region of the UK.



**THE ALUMINIUM PACKAGING
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