

2.2.3. Danone

Danone is a French multinational; its product ranges cover infant nutrition, water, and dairy- and plant-based products, and its well-known brands include Activia, Alpro, Aptamil, Nutricia, Evian and Volvic.¹ The company has declared its plastic footprint as 820,000 metric tonnes, and has published a breakdown of its packaging portfolio by material and packaging type.² It said that, in 2017, 86% of its total packaging (and 77% of plastic packaging) was already reusable, recyclable or compostable.³ The company was identified as the fourth-biggest global plastic polluter in the 2018 Break Free From Plastic Audit, but did not feature in the top ten in the 2019 audit.⁴ Nevertheless, as a multinational, fast-moving consumer-goods (FMCG) company with a significant plastic footprint, we have chosen to include Danone in this analysis.

Danone appears to be one of very few companies that explicitly reference the need for effective collection systems and express support for DRS, which is commendable.⁵ Danone also says it will help to meet - or go beyond - mandatory-collection targets, as set by regulators worldwide. To meet the EU's target of 90% collection for beverage bottles, the company outlines its support for 'the most effectively publicly organised schemes, including Extended Producer Responsibility and deposit return systems'.⁶

Despite being more explicit than many other companies on the importance of strengthening systems for collection - and stating that, by 2025, its 'goal is to have initiated or supported collection and recycling initiatives in each of our top 20 markets'⁷ - it is nevertheless disappointing that Danone neither call for over 90% mandatory separate collection of bottles in all geographies nor pledges to support DRS schemes globally, despite DRS being proven to be the most effective way to achieve such high rates of separate collection. It seems Danone is only willing to support such targets in regions where regulators have already made the first move. Therefore, we encourage the company to adopt a coherent global policy, calling for mandatory-collection legislation around the world.

When it comes to reduction, Danone committed only to halving the amount of virgin plastic used in its water brands, and it seems its plan to achieve this largely revolves around switching to rPET.⁸ Danone reports that half of its water volumes and one-third of the whole business is sold in reusable packaging, while 8.3% of its total packaging is reusable.⁹ It seems that part of the reference to volumes applies only to large water coolers,^{10,11} and it remains unclear whether this packaging is theoretically reusable or is actually being reused through alternative delivery models. As with 'recyclability', reusability targets can only be said to have been met when packaging is not only reusable by design but also part of a system through which it is able to be collected and reused in practice. The company outlines its goal of developing, by 2025, reuse and alternative delivery models that eliminate the need for single-use packaging;¹² so far, however, it seems to only be piloting new returnable-packaging models for Evian water, via TerraCycle's Loop initiative.¹³

Danone has set an average minimum recycled-content target of 25% for all plastic packaging, and an average of 50% recycled material for water and beverage bottles, by 2025. It reported having 14% rPET in water bottles in 2018, in countries where this is allowed. It also says Evian bottles will be made from 100% rPET by 2025, and that 100% rPET bottles will be introduced to its main markets by 2021, although it is unclear which brands this refers to.¹⁴ These targets seem to be more ambitious than those of their competitors; as such, it is confusing why the company is simultaneously investing in bio-based plastic

without any clear sustainability criteria. The company currently reports having reached 6.4% recycled material in its total volume of plastic packaging; this has increased from 5.3% in 2017, which they attribute to the increase of rPET.¹⁵

The company reports plans to eliminate single-use plastic straws and cutlery by 2025,¹⁶ and highlights a pilot scheme assessing alternatives to plastic straws with its Indonesian brand, Aqua.¹⁷ However, there is very little detail about how the single-use-plastic items will be eliminated, or whether they will be replaced with another single-use material. Danone has also committed to phasing out all PVC and PVDC from packaging by 2021.



Plastic litter including Danone products

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