

2.2.5. Mondelēz International

Mondelēz is one of the world's largest snack-food companies, with key brands including Belvita, Oreo, Ritz, TUC, Toblerone, Cadbury, Green & Black's, and Trident. It joined the New Plastics Economy Global Commitment in March 2020, but has not provided any details about its plastics footprint. Nevertheless, the company was the fourth-worst offender in the Break Free from Plastics 2019 Audit, and its non-recyclable pouches of Tang fruit drink were the most frequently collected type of waste packaging on beaches in the Philippines in 2017.¹

Mondelēz makes no mention of supporting legislative measures that would mandate separate collection of plastic packaging, and nowhere in its 2019 Impact Report does it mention recycled-content targets for plastic packaging,² although an article announcing its joining of the EMF New Plastics Economy Global Commitment points to a pitiful target of just 5% by weight.³

The company does talk about its target of eliminating 65,000 metric tonnes of packaging by 2020 (compared to a baseline in 2013), and reports it is on track, having already eliminated 64,850 metric tonnes.⁴ However, without further information, it is difficult to know whether this reduction refers to an absolute value and would continue irrespective of a growth in sales. It's also notable that this reduction does not specifically refer to plastic, but rather packaging more generally - and, without further transparency on the company's plastic footprint, it's very difficult to tell how this figure relates to its overall plastic production. In short, too much context is being hidden for this figure to be anywhere near meaningful.

In October 2018, the company announced a new commitment to make all its packaging recyclable by 2025 and provide recycling information in markets around the world. Mondelēz claims this commitment is part of its 'strategy for a circular packaging economy' by 'making it easier for consumers to recycle'.⁵ It also reported being on track to reach 100% recyclable packaging by 2025, with 90% 'recyclable or recycle-ready' in 2018.⁶ However, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, this strategy completely fails to address the issue that 'recyclable' does not necessarily mean the product is, in practice, recycled. Since mandatory collection of packaging is a basic precursor to recycling or reuse, Mondelēz cannot possibly guarantee its packaging is recycled, without any commitment or detailed proposals for collecting the packaging it puts on the market. Concerningly, Mondelēz is looking to chemical recycling - which is, as mentioned, an unproven and environmentally dubious technology (see Box 3.1) - to meet recycled-content targets in its Philadelphia cream-cheese packaging.⁷

As part of this commitment, the company claims to be supporting improvements of waste-management infrastructure and recycling rates; however, it is not clear exactly how. Mondelēz was also assessed very poorly for its stance on producer responsibility and packaging transparency, according to recent surveys by As You Sow.⁸ Overall, Mondelēz has very weak commitments, with scant detail and a heavy emphasis on recyclability and chemical recycling.



Mondelēz
International

Plastic pollution of a Mondelēz International brand |

Credit: Zero Waste Europe |

References

- 1 As You Sow (2020) Ocean plastics [ONLINE] Available at: <https://www.asyousow.org/our-work/waste/ocean-plastics>
- 2 Mondelez International (2019) Snacking made right [ONLINE] Available at: https://www.mondelezinternational.com/-/media/Mondelez/Snacking-Made-Right/SMR-Report/2019_MDLZ_Snacking_Made_Right_Report.pdf
- 3 Edie (2020) Mondelez signs up to UK Plastics Pact and Ellen MacArthur Foundation's Global Commitment [ONLINE] Available at: <https://www.edie.net/news/5/Mondelez-signs-up-to-UK-Plastics-Pact-and-Ellen-MacArthur-Foundation-s-Global-Commitment/>
- 4 Mondelez International (2020) Packaging innovation [ONLINE] Available at: <https://www.mondelezinternational.com/Snacking-Made-Right/Packaging-Innovation>
- 5 Mondelez International (2018) Mondelez International commits to making all packaging recyclable by 2025 [Press Release] 9 October [ONLINE] Available at: <https://ir.mondelezinternational.com/news-releases/news-release-details/mondelez-international-commits-making-all-packaging-recyclable>
- 6 Mondelez International (2018) Impact report [ONLINE] Available at: https://www.mondelezinternational.com/-/media/MondelezCorporate/uploads/downloads/2018_Impact_Progress_Report.pdf
- 7 Toloken, S. (2020) Chemically recycled plastic to be used in cream cheese packaging. Plastic News, 2 June [ONLINE] Available at: <https://www.plasticsnews.com/news/chemically-recycled-plastic-be-used-cream-cheese-packaging>
- 8 As You Sow (2020) Waste and opportunity 2020: Searching for corporate leadership [ONLINE] Available at: <https://www.asyousow.org/report-page/waste-and-opportunity-2020-searching-corporate-leadership>