

Press Release

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European retailers lead the way towards a sustainable future in a resource-constrained world

The fourth edition of the Retail Forum for Sustainability's Annual Event which took place today confirmed retailers' unwavering commitment to living up to their environmental responsibilities. Moreover, it proved that their enthusiasm for finding innovative solutions to meet their ambitious targets has not been dampened by the tough economic climate.

The Annual Event brought together over 100 sustainability experts from business, civil society and the EU institutions. Building on the success of previous events, the event focused on applying the three 'R's of waste management - reduce, reuse and recycle - to food waste, as well as the role that packaging can play in achieving these objectives.

In addition to key note speeches by the renowned sustainability leader, Tim 'Mac' Macartney, and by William Neale, member of the Cabinet of Commissioner Potočnik, the participants discussed packaging and food waste in working groups animated by company experts and officials from the European Commission.

The Annual Event was the culmination of another productive year for the Retail Forum which saw retail representatives and other interested stakeholders sharing best practices on textiles, sustainable water management and CSR reporting. The event also saw the launch of the latest edition of the Annual Report of the Retailers Environmental Action Programme (REAP), which details the progress made by REAP members in achieving their individual sustainability targets as codified in the 'Matrix of environmental Action Points'.

Speaking of the event, the Director-General of EuroCommerce, Christian Verschueren said: *"In an increasingly resource-restrained world, our sector recognises that not only does it have to be smarter about the way it provides goods and services, but also about how these are reused and recycled. Retailers are trying to become as efficient as possible and reduce their consumption of resources by innovating, investing in sustainability initiatives and working together, in fora such as the Retail Forum, to understand more about the complex challenges we face"*.

Dennis Kredler, Director General of the European Retail Round Table (ERRT) said: *"Despite the current economic downturn, and other challenges affecting business, retailers are leading the way in improving resource efficiency and encouraging their customers and supply chain partners to do the same. As today's event shows, REAP members continue to make impressive progress towards meeting their environmental targets and are reporting on their achievements in a transparent and consistent way"*.

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About the Retail Forum and the Retailers' Environmental Action Programme

The Retail Forum for Sustainability is an initiative of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Environment and the European retail industry. Membership of the Retail Forum is open to all retailers who join the Retailers' Environmental Action Programme (REAP). REAP members commit themselves every year to ambitious and specific environmental targets.

The Retail Forum was set up in 2009 in order to exchange best practices on sustainability in the European retail sector and to identify opportunities and barriers that may further or hinder the achievement of sustainable production and consumption. Since its inception, the following topics have been addressed: energy efficiency of stores, optimisation of distribution systems, marketing and effective communications, timber, environmental life cycle information for consumer products, the measurement and reduction of carbon footprint of stores, labelling, packaging optimisation and sustainable seafood.

The Retail Forum is co-chaired by the European Commission, EuroCommerce and ERRT.

Further information about the Retail Forum is available here:
http://ec.europa.eu/environment/industry/retail/index_en.htm

The Retailers' Environmental Action Programme Annual Report 2013 is available here:
<http://www.errt.org/media-room/publications>

EuroCommerce and the commerce sector

EuroCommerce represents the retail, wholesale and international trade sectors in Europe. Its membership includes commerce federations and companies in 31 European countries.

Commerce plays a unique role in the European economy, acting as the link between manufacturers and the nearly 500 million consumers across Europe over a billion times a day. It is a dynamic and labour-intensive sector, generating 11% of the EU's GDP. One company out of three in Europe is active in the commerce sector. Over 99% of the 6 million companies in commerce are small and medium-sized enterprises. It also includes some of Europe's most successful companies. The sector is a major source of employment creation: 33 million Europeans work in commerce, which is one of the few remaining job-creating activities in Europe. It also supports millions of dependent jobs throughout the supply chain from small local suppliers to international businesses. www.eurocommerce.be

European Retail Round Table (ERRT)

ERRT brings together the CEOs of Europe's leading retail companies who share their collective experience and ideas with policy makers in view of giving Europe's consumers better access to the benefits of the Single Market and to promote delivery of a sustainable consumption model.

Collectively, ERRT members employ more than 2.3 million people in over 40,000 stores. ERRT Members are: Asda Walmart, Auchan Group, C&A, Carrefour Group, Delhaize Group, El Corte Inglés, H&M, ICA, IKEA, Inditex, Jerónimo Martins, Lidl, Marks & Spencer, Mercadona, Metro Group, Royal Ahold and Tesco. www.errt.org