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Flexible Packaging Europe expresses concern about potential gas shortage and supply allocations

The members of Flexible Packaging Europe (FPE) welcome the consideration of the agri-food supply chain as “societally-critical” in the “Save Gas for a Safe Winter” initiative by the EU Commission and its Member States. Packaging is an integral part of this chain as recently outlined by Copa-Cogeca, Primary Food Processors, and FoodDrinkEurope. Other “societally-critical” value chains, such as the pharmaceutical and medical sectors, also rely on flexible packaging to ensure patients can access those products.

The flexible packaging sector remains very concerned about the potential shortage of natural gas availability in Europe. While the total consumption volume of gas used by the manufacturers of flexible packaging is rather limited compared to other industries, the sector and its customers rely on a stable and continuous access to gas to maintain its operations.

About 50% of all foods (excl. drinks, in units) are packed in flexible packaging (such as pouches, lids and or overwraps) so can be regarded as essential for agri-food supply chains. The use of flexible packaging for many pharmaceuticals (such as blisters and pouches) and medical applications (for example, sterilisation at medical device manufacturers or in the Central Sterile Supply Department (CSSD) of a hospital) is even higher. The industry delivers to its customers all over Europe and across many borders. As the packaging is usually specifically designed for the product, production cannot easily be changed to another supplier, even if they are available, in the short or even medium term.

Flexible packaging has been recognized in various life cycle assessment studies as a very lightweight and resource efficient packaging option, for example flexible pouches showed a more than 60% lower impact than the rigid alternatives when used for packing tomato sauce or olives.

“At the very least a stable gas supply over a defined period of time would avoid disrupting production of these materials, which are generally made using continuous processes. This way our industry can enable the agri-food, pharmaceutical and medical supply chains to maintain the safe and secure supply of products which are necessary and often vital to the European population,” said Guido Aufdemkamp, FPE’s Executive Director, commenting on the situation.

“From a macro-economic perspective flexible packaging might even be considered as one solution to help reduce gas and energy consumption. Particularly during these extraordinary times, all options to become more energy and resource efficient should be on the table for discussion. All actors in the industry are aware that any decisions made in this area will eventually disrupt value chains. The pandemic has shown that no one is fully aware of all the potential impacts. We are ready to support governments and legislators to address in potential impacts when they become apparent,” he added.

Further information:

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About Flexible Packaging Europe

Flexible Packaging Europe (FPE) is the industry association representing the interests of more than 80 small, medium-sized companies, and multinational manufacturers. Those operate with workforce of 57,000+ people at more than 350 sites all over Europe. The member companies account for more than 85% of European sales of flexible packaging made of different materials, mainly plastics, aluminium, and paper. More than half of all food products sold on the European retail markets are packed with flexible packaging. More info at www.flexpack-europe.org