

## **Ireland exceeds EU used packaging recycling targets by 14%**

- 565,000 tonnes or 64% of used packaging recycled
- Repak invested over €18 million in recycling in 2005 alone
- Household packaging recycling climbs 59%
- Domestic recycling collections reach an additional 1 million people in 2005
- Repak recycling fees top €20.6 million in 2005
- Repak warns of increasing cost pressures

Repak, the used packaging recycling scheme, has announced that it has met and exceeded the 2005 EU used packaging recycling target by 14%. Ireland had a target of 50%, but through the funding of its members and the systems that have been put in place over the last number of years, over 565,000 tonnes of packaging used was recycled, according to the Repak's 2005 results announced today.

Significant gains in the recycling of used packaging were observed across all sectors and material types with the biggest gain experienced in the recycling of domestic packaging. The amount of used packaging recycled from the domestic sector increased by 59% on 2004 figures with over 140,000 tonnes collected and recycled. This was achieved through growth in both bring bank tonnages up by 31% in 2005 and kerbside dry recycling tonnes which were up 140%. Both collection methods were driven by the introduction of 'pay by weight' and 'pay by use' systems launched in early 2005.

However, kerbside tonnes were further driven by Repak funding an additional 28 kerbside schemes reaching an extra 372,000 households nationwide or approximately a million additional people. Repak funded kerbside recycling collections are now reaching in excess of 820,000 households nationwide. Repak also support 2,200 bring banks and 70 recycling centres. These developments means that 55% of the household population now has access to kerbside dry recycling collections.

Increasing packaging recycling volumes from the domestic sector, which is still only at 35% of what could be recycled, is a double-edged sword, according to Andrew Hetherington, CEO, Repak. "It costs significantly more to recycle used packaging from householders than from commercial premises. The EU is challenging us with tougher, future packaging recycling targets and this means we need to dig deeper into the household bin which in turn, means Repak's packaging recycling fee will continue to rise."

During 2005, over €18 million was invested in funding the collection and recycling of used packaging by Repak members. This brings Repak's total investment in packaging recycling in Ireland to well over €93 million over the last 6 years and represents an 18% increase on the amount invested in 2004.

Commenting further on funding recycling in Ireland, Andrew Hetherington said, "Currently this cost is borne by a relatively small number of Repak members through our packaging recycling fees. Now, further action must be taken on non-compliers and those using loop holes in the law to avoid paying for their packaging recycling in Ireland. Also more companies need to be brought into the compliance net in order to ensure there is sufficient income to pay for future increases in recycling."

Of note from Repak's 2005 figures, the recycling of household plastic (mainly plastic bottles) increased by over 300% from 5,000 tonnes in 2004 to approx 17,000 tonnes in 2005. In general, plastic recycling lags behind the recycling of other material types at only 20%. This is because plastic recycling collection schemes are still in their infancy relative to glass and other materials.

By material type, the following percentage of packaging on the market was recycled:

- Glass – 83%
- Wood – 87%
- Cardboard and paper – 77%
- Metal – 65%

Repak's total recycling fee income in 2005 topped €20.6 million, up 18% on 2004, from a total 2,200 member companies. Repak recruited and certified 280 new members in 2005, yielding €1.7 million in new membership income. However, Repak still estimate its membership is only responsible for between 60-65% of all packaging, leaving a large funding gap. An independent study into the de minimis by Fitzpatrick Consultants for the National Strategy Group on Packaging Waste Recycling in 2005 showed that of the 85,000 registered companies in Ireland, 13,000 had a turnover greater than €1 million\* and could be therefore legally obligated to comply with the Waste Management Packaging Regulations 2003.

Finally, commenting on the success of the Repak scheme, Andrew Hetherington continued, "Industry in Ireland should be proud of the manner in which Ireland achieved and exceeded our 2005 EU target and industry should be congratulated for its significant contribution to our success to date. What the 2004 EPA waste database figure of 56% of used packaging recycled clearly shows is that Repak is aggressively driving packaging recycling and this figure compares very favourably against the municipal waste recycling rate of 34% and the current household waste recycling rate of 19.5%."

## Notes to Editors

Key Repak highlights for 2005 are:

- Total packaging recycled was 565,000 tonnes, up 18%.
- Total packaging recycling rate of c. 64%
- Household packaging recycling was 140,000 tonnes, up 59%
- Household Plastic recycling grew to 17,000 tonnes in 2005 up from 5,000 tonnes in 2004; a 300% increase. Plastic bottles represent the main part of the 17,000 tonnes, plastic bottle recycling is now circa 28% of all plastic bottles in Ireland. This was accounted for by increasing collection infrastructure particularly the inclusion of plastic bottles in kerbside schemes with the exception of Dublin.
- Repak's total packaging recycling fees were €20.6 million, with €1.7 million coming from 280 new members of the scheme.
- Repak membership exceeded the 2,000 mark for the first time with 2,135 members in the scheme at the end of 2005.
- Repak is now funding 28 kerbsides schemes reaching 820,000 households or 55% of all households nationwide.

\*According to the Waste Management Packaging Regulations 2003 a company with both €1 million turnover or more and 25 tonnes of packaging is obligated to either self-comply or join a compliance scheme.