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The PaperFlex Consortium launched to accelerate paper-based flexible packaging innovation

- **The PaperFlex Consortium – convened by the Ellen MacArthur Foundation and powered by (RE)SET – launches to accelerate recyclable and biodegradable paper-based flexible packaging innovation. Current members include Colgate-Palmolive, Mars, Nestlé, PepsiCo, Procter & Gamble, and Unilever.**
- **By joining R&D forces, members aim to bring viable alternative solutions for flexible plastic packaging to consumers faster.**
- **The consortium calls on businesses, innovators, suppliers and investors to work together, building on a report identifying responsibly-designed paper-based packaging as part of the Ellen MacArthur Foundation’s strategy to address plastic pollution.**

Six global consumer goods companies have come together to accelerate the development of responsibly designed paper-based alternatives to flexible plastic packaging.

The PaperFlex Consortium, convened by the **Ellen MacArthur Foundation** and powered by **(RE)SET**, includes **Colgate-Palmolive, Mars, Nestlé, PepsiCo, Procter & Gamble, and Unilever**, as founding members and is open for others to join.

The consortium will focus on markets where flexible plastic packaging is widely used and where a lack of collection and recycling systems could increase their likelihood of ending up in the environment.

For those markets, the consortium aims to design alternatives that are recyclable as collection systems improve, and biodegradable in the event they unintentionally end up in the environment.

Over the next few years, the consortium, through its members, intends to shape, fund and conduct collaborative trials covering innovations in areas such as biodegradable coatings, and other technologies that deliver product protection, shelf life, and consumer usability, and improve how paper-based materials perform on manufacturing lines.

Joint research and development efforts will help develop and scale promising innovations faster and at a lower cost, getting new options to consumers sooner.

While helping to accelerate the availability of solutions, each participating member will continue to adopt its own strategy and make decisions related to its packaging independently, individually and in their own independent interests.

Sander Defruyt, Strategy Lead for Plastics at the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, says: “Responsible paper-based flexible packaging solutions don’t yet exist at the performance, scale and cost required.

This consortium signals strong demand for them – and real ambition from six consumer goods companies to help scale them. We're inviting other FMCG companies, innovators, suppliers and investors to get involved now – the faster we develop such solutions, the sooner they reach the markets that need them most."

Frank Gana, CEO and co-founder of (RE)SET, adds: "Our track record in running R&D consortia shows how they can speed up the path to solutions. While participation in this consortium is voluntary and each member makes its own packaging decisions, this approach lets us develop and scale solutions faster and at lower cost – benefiting consumers, the environment, and the entire industry."

Gilles Demaurex, Head of Global Packaging Development at Nestlé, says: "Nestlé believes that paper-based flexible packaging can play a valuable role in addressing virgin plastic reduction and minimising flexible packaging waste and pollution. By joining our efforts under the PaperFlex Consortium, promising paper innovations will be developed and deployed responsibly at scale faster and at lower cost."

Allison Lin, Global VP of Healthy Planet and Chief Circularity Officer at Mars, says: "The consortium challenges the traditional mindset of innovating on our own, demonstrating that partnership – structured with legal oversight, clear guardrails on permissible topics, and an independent third-party convenor – can accelerate the development of more sustainable packaging in ways that no single company could achieve alone."

Pablo Costa, Head of Packaging, Digital and Transformation, R&D at Unilever, adds: "At Unilever, we have made significant investments in packaging innovation. Our dedicated teams are accelerating the development of next-generation paper-based packaging that can be scaled while delivering the experience consumers expect. Through the consortium, we are helping bring together the expertise, investment and shared learning needed to accelerate innovation and support a responsible transition at scale."

Flexible plastic packaging, including sachets, wrappers and pouches, is the fastest-growing type of plastic packaging worldwide, and scaled solutions to recycle the material are currently not widely available.

Small-format flexible plastic packaging is also identified as one of three key systemic barriers to tackling plastic waste in the [Foundation's 2030 Plastics Agenda for Business](#).

Today's announcement **[16 September 2026]** builds on the findings of the [Paper-Based Flexible Packaging – The role it could play in tackling small-format flexible plastic pollution in markets with high leakage rates](#) report published by the Foundation earlier this year. Tackling this challenge requires multiple tools, including reducing the use of small-format flexibles where feasible and designing those we do use for a circular economy.

Endorsed by 48 businesses, NGOs, investors and academics, the report identified responsible paper-based alternatives as a promising part of a broader strategy to address small-format flexible plastic waste in markets with greater waste management challenges, provided solutions meet six design criteria.

Those criteria, which include recyclability, biodegradability and responsible sourcing and production, aim to ensure paper-based packaging does not create new problems in place of the ones it is designed to solve and will guide the work of the consortium. These efforts will

be pursued while continuing to ensure food safety, product quality, consumer protection and regulatory compliance. Developing and deploying responsibly designed paper-based packaging will not happen overnight. There will be interim steps, deliberately designed and intended to progress towards addressing all six criteria.

While accelerating innovation is crucial, the report highlights it is equally important to ensure paper fibres are sustainably sourced and are used alongside efforts to help scale effective collection and recycling systems. The Foundation is calling on industry and governments to help close these gaps, for solutions to deliver their full environmental benefits.

For further information, or to register interest in joining the consortium, visit <http://paperflexconsortium.org/>

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Notes to editors

About the Ellen MacArthur Foundation

Launched in 2010, the Ellen MacArthur Foundation is a global charity accelerating the transition to a circular economy, one that eliminates waste, keeps materials in use, and regenerates nature to create a resilient system that benefits business, people, and the environment. By addressing today's most pressing challenges, our ambition is to deliver systemic change in the areas of plastics and packaging, critical minerals, and fashion and textiles by 2030.

About (RE)SET

The time for transformation is now. Since 2019, (RE)SET has been helping companies and organisations turn environmental ambition into concrete action. From multinational groups to SMEs and public-sector actors, we work alongside our clients from strategy through to implementation, helping them rethink products, value chains and business models to meet environmental and economic challenges. Our approach is built for action. Through the (RE)SET Model®, we combine strategy, innovation and collective approaches to identify solutions, mobilise ecosystems and accelerate their deployment at scale. Across packaging, textiles, cosmetics, household goods, agriculture and agri-food, mobility and construction, our ambition is the same: to help organisations transform resource constraints into opportunities for innovation, resilience and long-term competitiveness.

(RE)SET: turning environmental challenges into transformation pathways.

About the Paperflex Consortium

The PaperFlex Consortium, convened by the Ellen MacArthur Foundation and powered by (RE)SET, includes Colgate-Palmolive, Mars, Nestlé, PepsiCo, Procter & Gamble, and Unilever, as founding members.

The consortium aims to accelerate the development and scaling of responsibly designed paper-based flexible packaging through R&D partnership, focused on markets with limited formal collection and recycling systems. It is guided by a dual end-of-life ambition covering both recyclability and biodegradability.

Over the next few years, members will aim to shape, fund and conduct collaborative trials covering innovations in areas such as biodegradable coatings, new coating technologies, and improving how paper-based materials perform on manufacturing lines.

The consortium invites other FMCG companies using small-format flexible packaging to join, to help scale solutions faster and at lower cost.

For more information, visit <https://paperflexconsortium.org/>