MEDIA RELEASE

Recycled drink bottles get day in the sun

Johannesburg, 17 November 2011 – The use of recycled post-consumer plastics in food packaging is rapidly gaining momentum in South Africa, with Woolworths’ new plastic juice bottles winning two awards at the SA Plastic Recycling Organisation’s recent Best Recycled Product Competition.

Supplied by packaging manufacturer Polypet, a division of Polyoak Packaging, the 1.5 litre juice bottles contain up to 30% recycled PET (rPET), supplied by Germiston recycler Extrupet.

Extrupet became the first plastic recycler in the world to gain the sought-after British Retail Consortium (BRC) certification for its food-grade products back in 2010 and was recently rewarded the accreditation in October this year. This means the recycled plastic – mostly old drink bottles – from its food-grade recycling plant meet the UK’s stringent food safety standards, and can be used in fruit punnets and drinking bottles by Britain’s top retailers like Sainsburys, Tesco and Marks and Spencer.

Chandru Wadhwani, executive director at Extrupet, says he expects other packaging companies, retailers and well-known FMCG companies to follow Polyoak Packaging and Woolworths’ example soon.

“Driven by demands from their retail clients, local packaging manufacturers will need to step up their use of rPET if they are to compete with the likes of Marks & Spencer, which uses various percentages of rPET in 84% of its food packaging,” said Wadhwani.

“We see a steep increase in the adoption of recycled materials in the production process in South Africa in the short to medium term.”

Rowan le Roux, sustainability manager at Polyoak Packaging, says rPET is rapidly emerging as a viable alternative to more costly - and less environmentally-friendly – virgin materials.

“It’s not only good business to use Extrupet’s recycled PET, but it is a more sustainable solution for the longer term viability of our value chain, and certainly a top-quality alternative to virgin materials,” says Le Roux.

Tom McLaughlin, a packaging and sustainability specialist at Woolworths, says local consumers are becoming more environmentally conscious, especially when it comes to recycling and re-using. “We fully support the eradication of stigmas around recycled food packaging. Packaging made with rPET is ecologically sound and technologically advanced, with absolutely no compromise on food safety,” says Mc Laughlin.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

Lani Botha, Fleishman-Hillard
lani.botha@fleishman.co.za
Tel: +27 11 548 2023
Cell: +27 82 546 8844

Sarah Maeli, Extrupet
marketing@extrupet.co.za
Tel: +27 11 865 8373
Cell: +27 83 677 3859