New Report: Where Now for Plastic Packaging? Plastic Recycling Myths and Ways Forward

Thursday 15 May, 2025

London, UK –REUSE Foundation today released a report that challenges the mainstream narrative that recycling can solve the plastics crisis. Drawing on the latest global data, it shows that despite decades of promotion, **plastic recycling remains largely ineffective—while plastic production and pollution continue to rise**.

The report, titled **“Where Now for Plastic Packaging?”**, reveals that:

- Global plastic production is on track to triple by 2060, yet just 9% is currently recycled, rising only to 17% by 2060 (OECD).
- ?So-called “recyclable” plastic is often downcycled, burned, or shipped abroad, contributing to waste and emissions and is not a circular solution.
- ?For leading brands, reusable packaging as a share of total plastic packaging has fallen, from 1.6% in 2019 to 1.3% in 2023.
- ?Reuse, not recycling, is widely acknowledged by organisations like the World Economic Forum as the most effective solution—but it is being systematically ignored.

“The plastics crisis isn’t being solved—it’s being greenwashed,” said a Roger Sharp, REUSE Foundation Trustee. “Recycling has been used as cover while plastic production rises. **We need a systems shift to reuse,** a conclusion increasingly reached by campaigners, NGOs, governments and corporations alike”.

The report points to research from the World Economic Forum that finds shifting just 10% of plastic packaging to reusable formats could reduce ocean-bound plastic waste by up to 50%, underscoring the potential gains of adopting reuse solutions.

Read the full report: www.reusefoundation.org

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