

PRESS RELEASE

's-Hertogenbosch, 1 July 2008

The first international plastic recycling in the horticultural sector celebrates 15 years of success

EPS Gardentrays return scheme has saved 25 million litres of oil

In 15 years the EPS Gardentrays recovery and recycling scheme has recycled a quantity of EPS(Expandable Polystyrene) that equates to 25 million litres of mineral oil. This makes EPS Gardentrays one of the longest established and most successful return schemes in the horticultural sector and plastics industry.

EPS Gardentrays is an initiative of the EPS industry in the Netherlands, Germany and Denmark and has focussed on the recovery and recycling of used EPS trays in the horticultural sector since 1992. EPS can be 100% recycled when it is clean, however, EPS Gardentrays has also succeeded in recycling all contaminated trays. The recycling technique and the logistical organisation behind EPS Gardentrays has ensured that 85% of all used EPS sowing, bedding and transport trays in the horticultural sector are currently recycled.

Environmental benefit

The environmental benefit that EPS Gardentrays has achieved has become massive, almost without being noticed. In its 15 years of existence, the organisation has recovered precisely 1,217,872 cubic metres of contaminated EPS from the market and recycled this into raw material for new plastic products or additives for products such as lightweight concrete. Because the EPS plastic retains its energy value, the recycled volume of EPS equates to 25 million litres of mineral oil. "In other words, this volume of oil has not been lost. Moreover, this natural raw material is reused in a worthwhile and responsible way for new products", says Wout Abbenhuis, Chairman of EPS Gardentrays. "With that energy, which you can convert back into the equivalent of 33 million m³ of natural gas, you can heat all of the houses in a town such as Zandvoort for five years. In addition to this, the reuse of these natural raw materials means that 62 million kilograms less of CO₂ entered the atmosphere", says Abbenhuis.

Increase

Since the launch of EPS Gardentray the recycling percentage has steadily increased. Originally, new German legislation was the initial reason for establishing the international joint venture of EPS manufacturers. However, it quickly appeared that the recycled EPS was a raw material that was in demand for new plastic products and more. During the first few years of its existence, EPS Gardentrays recovered an average of 40 percent of all used EPS trays in the Netherlands and Germany. The volume increased to more than 85% in 2007, the highest level ever achieved. The EPS trays are still collected free of charge from the nurserymen.



Despite the successful return scheme, the EPS tray has lost some of its market share in the horticultural sector. On the other hand, EPS is seeing a strong increase in demand in other sectors, partly due to new uses and material formulae. "Many growers still prefer to use EPS trays", says Abbenhuis. "They use the tray once, it's hygienic, light-weight, easy to handle, does not absorb moisture, reflects light and it reduces the growing time due to the insulating properties of EPS. EPS also provides the best shock absorption during transport. In addition, it's collected free of charge by EPS Gardentrays and fully recycled." He therefore finds it a shame that other parties in the horticultural chain have opted for different materials: "The EPS industry has an enormous amount of innovative know-how which can assist in further optimising the cultivation of plants. That know-how is currently under-utilised." On the other hand for example, EPS innovations are greeted with open arms in the building and packing sectors: "The use of EPS for foundations, shuttering and roof and floor insulation is increasing considerably. More and more types of EPS are being developed in various colours, temperature resistances, higher insulation values and extra shock absorption through compounding with rubbers. As a result of the new compounds, EPS is now frequently used for insulation and protection purposes in sectors such as the automotive industry and installation engineering."

Impressed

15 years of EPS Gardentray success is being celebrated privately and modestly. "We have never shouted about the initiative from the roof tops", says Abbenhuis. "But if you look at the recycling figures you can't help but be impressed by the enormous benefits to the environment that we have achieved. EPS Gardentrays was the first international return scheme for plastics in the horticultural sector and one of the first international joint ventures for plastic recycling in general. We can say that we were well ahead of the current discussions about packaging taxation. Which only serves to further emphasize the drive for innovation within the EPS industry", according to the Chairman of EPS Gardentrays.

Notes for editors, not for publication

For more information about this press release please call Wout Abbenhuis: 06-51305267. More information about EPS Gardentrays can be found on the website at <u>www.eps.gardentrays.nl</u>. Page 3 of this press release provides a schedule of the recovery quota by EPS Gardentrays.

Full information about EPS recycling can be found in the 'EPS White Book' Position Paper from the European EPS sector organisation EUMEPS. The document can be downloaded via the Internet from: www.eumeps.org/whiteb.htm



EPS Gardentrays recovery quota

Recovered from the market		Production	Percentage
m3	units	units	
104,816	12,577,920	54,724,502	23%
131,139	15,736,680	41,105,039	38%
108,388	13,006,560	24,905,044	52%
87,246	10,469,520	20,478,271	51%
77,608	9,312,960	18,505,211	50%
79,885	9,586,200	17,853,439	54%
81,332	9,759,840	17,062,872	57%
83,836	10,060,320	16,341,592	62%
86,235	9,054,675	14,831,129	61%
61,938	6,503,490	10,348,400	63%
63,549	6,672,645	9,970,322	67%
56,964	5,981,220	9,207,079	65%
57,945	6,084,225	8,625,815	71%
52,415	5,503,575	7,539,965	73%
39,000	4,095,000	5,757,325	71%
45,576	4,785,480	5,601,162	85%
	Recovered fro m3 104,816 131,139 108,388 87,246 77,608 79,885 81,332 83,836 86,235 61,938 63,549 56,964 57,945 52,415 39,000 45,576	Recovered from the market m3m3units104,81612,577,920131,13915,736,680108,38813,006,56087,24610,469,52077,6089,312,96079,8859,586,20081,3329,759,84083,83610,060,32086,2359,054,67561,9386,503,49063,5496,672,64556,9645,981,22057,9456,084,22552,4155,503,57539,0004,095,00045,5764,785,480	Recovered from the market m3Production units104,81612,577,92054,724,502131,13915,736,68041,105,039108,38813,006,56024,905,04487,24610,469,52020,478,27177,6089,312,96018,505,21179,8859,586,20017,853,43981,3329,759,84017,062,87283,83610,060,32016,341,59286,2359,054,67514,831,12961,9386,503,49010,348,40063,5496,672,6459,970,32256,9645,981,2209,207,07957,9456,084,2258,625,81552,4155,503,5757,539,96539,0004,095,0005,757,32545,5764,785,4805,601,162

Total 1,217,872