



Changing Markets Foundation
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United Kingdom

Mr James Quincey
1 Coca Cola Plz NW
Atlanta, GA 30313
United States

London, 29 October 2020

Dear Mr Quincey,

We are writing to you in regard to our recent investigation and report entitled [*Talking Trash: the corporate playbook of false solutions to the plastic crisis*](#), released on 17th September 2020.

The report investigates industry tactics in the face of an unprecedented plastic pollution crisis and growing pressure to address it. We critically analysed the voluntary commitments to tackle plastic pollution of the ten most plastic polluting companies (Coca-Cola, Colgate-Palmolive, Danone, Mars Incorporated, Mondelēz International, Nestlé, PepsiCo, Procter & Gamble, Perfetti van Melle and Unilever), as well as several other major group initiatives around the world. This, in combination with research and investigations into industry lobbying in 15 countries across 5 continents, where plastic legislation was proposed, revealed a global trend of corporations trying to undermine proven legislative solutions to the plastic crisis.

Our analysis of voluntary commitments made by Coca-Cola revealed a worrying track-record of broken promises pertaining to plastic; starting with a failed commitment in 1990 to introduce bottles with 25% recycled content, the majority of your company's ambitious-sounding pledges have either been broken, significantly reinterpreted, delayed or ignored. As a company with 2.9 million tonnes of plastic used annually – the largest plastic footprint of any company globally – this lack of accountability is extremely concerning.

Just as concerning is the behaviour of Coca-Cola around the world in undermining legislative approaches to curbing the plastic crisis. Despite your company's 2018 commitment to collect the equivalent of 100% of your packaging by 2030, and your qualified support for deposit return systems in Western Europe, our investigation found that Coca-Cola and its franchises have attempted to undermine deposit return legislation in Kenya, China and the U.S. state of Georgia – legislation that would not only help the company to achieve its collection goals, but that is also a proven solution to reducing marine litter and providing high quality recycle that can be recycled back into beverage containers.

We have seen your response to our report in the media and while we welcome your stance of learning from your broken promises in the past, it is clear that your current promises are unachievable without clear support for progressive legislation. This will also undermine your reputation and credibility, as most public opinion research clearly indicates that consumers want corporations to take action in reducing plastic pollution, redesigning packaging and embracing reuse. Your announcements of high percentages of recycled content and collection must be applied globally across all markets, while we also urge you to adopt

ambitious reuse targets and to publicly support deposit return systems globally, and not just in the EU, where legislation already exists.

We have outlined a series of recommendations for companies in the report, chief of which are:

- Ensure commitments are more ambitious than existing, or proposed, legislation to address plastic pollution. Openly express support of – and call for – progressive legislation to address the plastic crisis, encourage peers to do the same and leave any industry initiatives that oppose, delay or undermine progressive legislation – including its implementation. In this instance, we are asking Coca-Cola to publicly support deposit return systems globally, as these are precursors to reduction of litter and key instruments to set up reuse and recycling infrastructure.
- Be transparent about the company's full plastic footprint (including products and packaging) and progress against targets on plastic, setting out a holistic approach to discourage 'virtue signalling' with tokenistic gestures (e.g. products from ocean plastic). Ensure such reporting includes achievements across all markets and brands, and is based on independently verified data
- Commit to meaningful measures that would lead to a significant reduction in single-use plastics and other single-use materials. These measures need to be specific, measurable, time-bound and independently verified, and should include ambitious targets for reuse and refill, redesign of products and effective recycling.¹
- Outline clear positions on the use of alternative materials, such as bio-based, biodegradable and compostable plastic, with justifications for what is – and isn't – a good use of these materials, including clear sustainability criteria that prevent deforestation or competition with food. Such positions should not mislead or confuse consumers or undermine current recycling systems.
- Ensure commitments are enacted consistently across all markets in which the company (and its subsidiaries) operates; that is, ensure there is no contradiction between how a company acts on the issue of plastic pollution in one market compared to how it acts in another.

If Coca-Cola is truly committed to a 'World Without Waste', it must publicly advocate for legislative solutions to the crisis and also leave trade groups and other organisations that were set up and continue to oppose legislative solutions. It should also distance itself publicly from producer responsibility organisations in opposition to deposit return systems, such as ARA in Austria, EKO-KOM in the Czech Republic and Ecoembes in Spain.

We would appreciate it if you could respond to this letter by 19th November 2020, and we remain at your disposal for any additional information.

Yours sincerely,



Nuša Urbančič, Campaigns Director, Changing Markets Foundation

CC: Bea Perez, Chief Public Affairs, Communications and Sustainability Officer
Therese Noorlander, Sustainability Director Europe
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¹ This is sometimes also called closed-loop recycling, where for example a plastic bottle can be recycled multiple times into a plastic bottle and not down-cycled into, for example fibres for the carpet and fashion industry. Some plastic polymers, such as PET and HDPE, can be mechanically recycled into new plastic products multiple times, if collected through clean waste streams.

This letter is also endorsed by:

