

Sonoco Flexible Packaging – Circular Economy

A Flexible Solution to the Circular Economy

For the past three years, Sonoco's development team has been working tirelessly to create recyclable, paper-based packaging that meets the needs of both brand owners and consumers. The portfolio was designed with the goal of bringing curbside recyclability to flexible packaging while reducing virgin plastic use. To achieve this, Sonoco collaborated with stakeholders across the value chain, leveraging our roots as a supplier and recycler of paper products. The result was a suite of renewable-based solutions for various applications, that enable flexible packages to take part in the circular economy.

The innovative barrier materials used in EnviroFlex® Paper allow the packaging to meet the Fiber Box Association® Voluntary Standard for Recyclability and Repulpability, and still provide the capability to replace many non-recyclable structures. These structures were also developed without the use of substances of concern, such as PFAS and PVDC. This provides consumers with peace of mind and simplifies recycling, as the packaging can make use of existing paper recycling infrastructure. EnviroFlex Paper is available in rollstock and premade pouch formats that can provide a drop-in replacement for existing structures, making it easy for brands to make the switch to sustainable packaging, with no impact to their manufacturing.

Sonoco's EnviroFlex Paper portfolio represents a significant step forward in sustainable packaging solutions. By combining our expertise in paper, coatings, and barrier technologies, applications as simple as overwraps for hygiene or as complex as shelf stable, high barrier products are now possible. With the elimination of substances of concern, access to existing paper recycling infrastructure and range of packaging formats, EnviroFlex Paper is poised to make a significant impact in the transition to a circular economy, without compromising shelf life and consumer experience.

Flexible packaging is proven to have a lower environmental footprint than other package types, such as glass, metal, and rigid plastics. Unfortunately, this claim is often diminished by the reality that flexible packages have traditionally been difficult to recycle. Due to the lack of recycling structure for plastic laminates, and tendency for flexible packages to escape trash collection, litter has been a major problem. EnviroFlex Paper provides the missing link for recyclable flexible packaging. EnviroFlex Paper enables brand owners to move from mixed plastic laminates to a fully recyclable package, significantly reducing the use of virgin plastics, and providing consumers with a convenient recycling option in the curbside paper stream. Achieving pre-qualification through How2Recycle®, EnviroFlex® Paper ULT 1.0, our highest barrier structure, was proven to be acceptable in the paper stream.