

Dairy Pulse blog with 92<sup>nd</sup> edition of DairyPulse from August 16<sup>th</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> 2019

## A package must save more than what it costs

Dear friends,

"According to an authentic estimate, about five crore liters capacity of milk is being packed per day amounting to about 10 cores pouches per day. Shri Kuldeep Sharma Dairy Guru has calculated that the total surface area covered by 10 crore pouches per day will be equivalent to 1752 sq. kilometer which is more than the total area of Delhi and Kolkata put together. If these 10 crore pouches were to be weighed some 250 metric tonnes of plastic is used per day. Indian dairies packaging waste is a major issue in retailing."

-----From the desk of Dr. G S Rajoria  
President Indian Dairy Association in Indian Dairyman

We shall be dedicating this edition of the dairy pulse on the impact of dairy generated plastics on environment.

" A package must save more than it costs" , the golden words of Hans Rausing, son of Founder of Tetrapak passed away at the age of 93 last week. This statement remained as the tag line of tetra pack for over a couple of decades. I find this statement most apt from the context of product stewardship as coined by Dr. C K Prahalad. Let us look at the excerpts from his seminal research in which he shares strategies for building an inclusive future as follows :

There are four core dimensions of sustainability strategy with different linkages to firm performance and value creation:

- **Pollution Prevention:** minimizing waste and emissions from current facilities and operations;
- **Product Stewardship: engaging stakeholders and managing the full life cycle of today's products;**
- **Clean Technology:** developing and deploying "next-generation" clean technologies; and
- **Base of the Pyramid:** co-creating new businesses to serve the unmet needs of the poor and underserved.

The debate on banning the use of plastics to save the environment is the latest fad in our country. The same plastics which was considered as the most innovative and useful product of the Millenium is now being considered evil. The level of infrastructure which has been built up throughout the country (at least for making packaging material for the dairy sector) is largely at risk today. Forget about the investments but think of employment generated by the complete supply chain for such products.

I do not think that plastic is at the core of the problem. The problem lies with the **product stewardship** as exuded by the actions of all stakeholders from the dairy sector including the complete supply chain of packaging manufacturers. The major issue is developing an ecosystem of collecting back the used plastics and later disposing of off to recycling centers.

A number of startups are currently making some meaningful products out of these used packets. The Indian government is also looking forward to having such recycling stations wherein used pet bottles would be converted into caps and T-shirts.

We all will have to share our bit in supporting this initiative of the plastic-free environment to make the dream of our prime minister come true. Collecting back the used packaging material from households and taking it back to the plant is not new to the Indian dairy industry. **It was getting done when Milk was being sold in glass bottles.** Customers were also habitual of bringing back used bottles to point of sales at that time. I still remember that during my childhood I used to carry 4 empty bottles to Delhi Milk Scheme's booth in 80s and I also witnessed the launch of Mother dairy bulk vending in the early 70s. It used to be a lot of fun carrying the utensil from home and getting amazed while watching milk coming out from the dispenser after inserting a coin.

Some of the solutions being suggested by federal thinktank like stopping 500ml pouch and converting into the 1-liter pouch from October 2019 needs to be relooked as it doesn't seem to be inclusive of 200 ml pouches (which are mainly meant for economically backward social strata)

What we need now is to incentivize the customer to bring the plastic pouches back to the retail shop and later disposing off to a recycling station. Local municipalities may be collaborated to take care of the logistics. To initiate the same help from NGOs and civil society which are currently active in collecting leftover food etc may be used to create a localized proof of concepts.

There could be the installation of plastic recycling plants under PPP model wherein dairies could also support and the government may directly offer grant (out of their existing huge subsidies meant for dairy development). The government, in turn, could give priorities to these recycled products under DGS&D schemes for all of their requirements under new and existing projects.

Everyone will have to think and share how it could be done.

We all will have to follow the historical quote by a great psychologist Carl Jung that **"What you resist persists,"** So we have to accept this change and make Indian dairying flourish with plastic and Indian economy flourish with recycled plastic products from the dairy sector.

At the end, I would once again like to pray almighty for Hans Rausing to have his soul rest in peace.

Happy e-reading,

with best regards

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