

United Kingdom Plastic Packaging - Market Share Analysis, Industry Trends & Statistics, Growth Forecasts (2025 - 2030)

Market Report | 2025-04-28 | 108 pages | Mordor Intelligence

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Report description:

The United Kingdom Plastic Packaging Market is expected to register a CAGR of 2.87% during the forecast period.

The UK packaging industry is expanding significantly due to the region's expanding industrial sector, which is driving up demand for packaging services there. The UK packaging manufacturing industry generated GBP 11 billion (USD 13.59 billion) in annual sales, according to the Packaging Federation of the United Kingdom. It employs more than 85,000 people, representing 3% of the manufacturing workforce in the United Kingdom. Furthermore, it plays a crucial role in the larger packaging supply chain and contributes significantly to the UK GDP.

The packaging sector in the United Kingdom is largely composed of plastic packaging. Furthermore, due to extensive manufacturing capabilities, it is expected that the UK market for plastic packaging would generate a sizeable amount of income. The UK Parliament estimates that five million tons of plastic are used there annually, with packaging accounting for approximately half of that.

Due to the growth of the flexible packaging industry, plastics are also in demand in the United Kingdom. The market need is being helped by both the expansion of international vendors in this area and the acquisition of local businesses.

Among various industries using plastic, the dairy industry is focusing on reducing plastic use. The UK's Food and Farming Minister, Lord Rooker, called for the country's dairy industry to become more sustainable, targeting a 50% reduction in the number of plastics used in milk packaging. That indicates even more growth for greener packaging in a country that has already shown innovative diversity.

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Brexit is anticipated to increase plastic packaging costs in the United Kingdom due to rising trade regulations between the European Union and the United Kingdom, a shortage of skilled labor, a loss of competitiveness for local resin producers, and a decline in plastic recycling rates, all of which could potentially have an impact on the country's plastic packaging industry.

UK Plastic Packaging Market Trends

Food Industry Driving Prominent Growth

Food packaging is one of the most significant users of plastics. The demand for plastic packaging in the food industry is increasing. They are increasingly replacing traditional materials, such as paperboard, metals, and glass, owing to their beneficial properties, such as lightweight and reduced cost.

The preference for processed and packaged foods has propelled the food packaging market in the region due to rapidly developing lifestyles and economic growth. The main reason for the increasing preference for processed food is the shifting population dynamics toward urban centers from rural areas.

However, the region is witnessing an increasing amount of plastic packaging waste (by 2% annually). The EU Commission is considering the general ban on plastic packaging, which is expected to constrain market growth. Virginijus Sinkevicius, the new EU Commissioner for Environment, stated that they are planning to ban plastic packaging or the usage of recycled plastic.

Over the forecast period, stand-up pouches are expected to become a standard form of food packaging due to their ability to retain the freshness of food products and extend the shelf life of products. In addition, the pouches also offer a great visible aesthetic, adding to the marketing benefits of products. This has led to the wide adoption of pouches as a stable alternative to other formats and is expected to take further momentum in terms of demand and customer acceptance during the forecast period. In the United Kingdom, sustainability and recyclability play a significant role in raising consumer preference toward brands.

Flexible Packaging is Expected to Observe Significant Growth

Flexible packaging in the United Kingdom is expected to witness a stable growth rate during the forecast period. The increasing number of end users, such as pet food, fresh food, and coffee, is driving the need for producing higher flexible packaging in the region. The general trend of the shift from rigid to flexible to fit the changing lifestyles, along with the growth of smaller households, is increasing the need for single-serve options.

Flexible packaging increases the sustainability of the products by increasing their shelf life. It has also enabled the introduction of new products, like frozen food, which has been realized only through flexible packaging.

Food production witnessed an unprecedented boom at the beginning of the pandemic, while some fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) manufacturers repurposed production lines. The market for flexible plastic packaging in the United Kingdom is anticipated to register significant revenue due to substantial manufacturing facilities.

However, to motivate investment in much-needed jobs and infrastructure to make flexible plastic recycling a financially sustainable system in the United Kingdom, the Flexible Packaging Fund was launched in 2021. FMCG and retail leaders, including Mars UK, Mondelez International, Nestle, PepsiCo, and Unilever, teamed up to form a GBP 1 million (approximately USD 1.2 million) fund to help make flexible plastic recycling economically viable for recyclers and easier for consumers. In collaboration with manufacturers, retailers, and recyclers, the fund intends to improve flexible plastic recycling and reduce plastic pollution by giving the material a stable value.

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Several factors, like a steady rise in the demand for processed food and increasing adoption of lightweight flexibles, drive the market with varying impacts over the short, medium, and long-term periods. Further, the market for frozen food packaging is witnessing an upsurge in demand with the consumer appreciation of the product quality in the region. With the growth in the economy and changing lifestyles, there is an increased demand for frozen food packaging in Europe, and the market is expected to grow lucratively during the forecast period.

Increasing recycling rates in the United Kingdom have been driving the use of flexible plastic packaging in the country. According to UK Statistics on Waste, published in July 2022, the recycling rate of packaging waste increased in the country from 59.2% in 2014 to 63.2% in 2021. Initiatives by private players are also helping the recycling rate to improve, driving the usage of flexible plastic packaging in the country.

UK Plastic Packaging Industry Overview

As the demand for plastic packaging has been increasing significantly in the United Kingdom, the market is mildly concentrated with the presence of major players like Amcor, Coveris Holding, Berry Global, Sealed Air Corporation, and Constantia Flexibles, among others.

In October 2022, Greiner Packaging UK and Ireland, which was celebrating its 50th anniversary in Dungannon, Northern Ireland, announced a GBP 10 million (USD 10.6 million) investment program and set a goal of GBP 100 million (USD 106.3 million) in revenue. The company also revealed plans to invest over GBP 10 million (about USD 10.6 million) in new machinery installation, a new manufacturing hall's commissioning, and an increase in the warehouse's capacity from 3,000 to 11,000 spaces. It produces almost five million plastic pots every day in Dungannon for significant dairy producers, including Dale Farm, Yeo Valley, Arla, and Irish Yogurts.

In September 2022, to assist businesses in achieving their sustainability objectives, Sealed Air created a variety of new protective packaging options under the BUBBLE WRAP brand that incorporate recycled content. To help businesses fulfill the rising need for packaging that is more environmentally friendly, three new inflatable films have been introduced that use 30% or 50% recycled plastic waste.

Additional Benefits:

- The market estimate (ME) sheet in Excel format
- 3 months of analyst support

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