

29 May 2024 | Interviews

# Plastic Packaging: The Search For Alternatives Must Be Pragmatic Not Emotionally Driven

by [David Ridley](#)

Packaging manufacturer Logoplaste – supplier to major consumer health and cosmetics firms – speaks to HBW Insight about plastics and working with industry to develop alternatives.

A consensus seems to be emerging within industries heavily reliant on plastics: we may have to accept that completely getting rid of plastics won't be possible.

Plastic-ban advocates will not be satisfied with this position and may see it as an example of “confirmation bias” – the tendency to search for, interpret, favor, and recall information in a way that confirms or supports one's prior beliefs or values.

But for consumer health manufacturers, there doesn't seem to be much choice at this moment in time. OTC medicines in particular need to be safe and stable, and plastic fits the bill perfectly.

“It's almost impossible to think that we can live without plastic,” reflected Paulo Correia, chief technology officer of global “just in time” packaging supplier Logoplaste. “If you look at most packaging needs today, plastic is still the best solution,” Correia said, drawing on Logoplaste's experience supplying bespoke packaging solutions to large multinational companies like Kenvue, Reckitt and Procter & Gamble.

The issue with plastic, Correia told HBW Insight, is that it has “not been valued appropriately,” which means that it is disposed without any consideration of its wider impact. We have been “putting products on the market without assuring recycling streams for them,” he noted.

The emotional reaction to the resulting plastic pollution, including the view that all single-use

plastics should be banned, is “understandable,” he said, but is “not a very honest conversation” about what the future of packaging should look like.

## Head Not Heart

While currently heavily invested in plastics, particularly in the rigid plastic bottles widespread in cosmetics, consumer health and food packaging – produced by the firm’s “wall-to-wall” integrated production system within final product manufacturers’ own factories – Logoplaste takes a more pragmatic view.

“We are agnostic in terms of technology and materials,” Correia commented. “We don’t really care what type of material we use. We look at our partners’ products, we look at the technological possibilities on the market and we work together to select the best solution.”

It is simply “not realistic” to think that there will be one packaging solution for everyone, Correia insisted. “For a start, there would not be enough material for everybody,” he noted.

Logoplaste’s pragmatism, therefore, applies to the future as well. In terms of sustainable packaging alternatives, the right choice for each product will include considerations about not only cost, but what is attractive to consumers. “What’s going to happen is that you will have packaging and products that will naturally fit in cans, some in glass, some in plastic, and some in fiber bottles as well,” he said.

## In It Together

Correia is here pointing to Logoplaste’s recent announcement that it has joined the “Bottle Collective” – an initiative spearheaded by PA Consulting and PulPac exploring whether the latter’s dry molded fiber technology can replace single-use plastic in consumer health, food and cosmetic bottles.

Similarly to PA Consulting’s and PulPac’s Blister Pack Collective, the hope is that renewable pulp and cellulose can provide final product manufacturers with the basis for affordable and high-performance bottles that can be recycled in paper packaging recycling streams. (Also see "[Over The Counter: Solving The Sustainable Pill Pack Puzzle, With PA Consulting’s Tony Perrotta](#)" - HBW Insight, 8 May, 2024.)

As “experts in injection molding and blowing,” Logoplaste said it will play a key role in the collective – which also counts Haleon and Sanofi as members – in “improving the overall barrier performance of the bottle lining technology and making it adjustable to the specific needs and requirements of the consortium.”

Correia re-affirmed in the accompanying press release that joining the Bottle Collective was “totally aligned with the DNA” of Logoplaste, which is to say its “fully agnostic approach” and

commitment to “offering a broad view of solutions that respond to the specific sustainability needs of each one of our partners.”

### **Plastic Misperception**

This need to constantly re-affirm Logoplaste’s agnostic approach to materials comes from experience in dealing with alternative materials start-ups and projects, Correia explained.

In the past, when Logoplaste has tried to approach some of these alternative materials companies, it was “seen kind of as a threat,” he said. The attitude was that “these guys are plastic producers. What the hell do they want with fibers? It took some time for people exactly to understand that we’re pretty agnostic in terms of the approaches that we take.”

Logoplaste’s pragmatism has also meant being sure that these alternative materials really do have the potential to replace plastics. “For us it was key to understand where the technology could take us and understand what it means in its full perspective, i.e. cost, technology maturity, etc.,” Correia explained.

What made a real difference, Correia said, was having companies like Haleon and Sanofi on board. “Most of the companies involved in these types of consortiums have direct connections with Logoplaste,” he pointed out, “meaning they know the company has an open approach to new technologies, as well as also bringing a different level of maturity to the technology on an industrial level.”

Along with its existing relationship with PA Consulting, these historical partnerships with members of the Bottle Collective meant that Logoplaste had been highlighted as a “potentially relevant partner in the consortium,” which led to a “more solid discussion” and ultimately to the company joining, Correia said.

### **Nurturing A Niche**

The Bottle Collective is not the only sustainability horse that Logoplaste is betting on. The firm has also been involved in numerous other projects and consortiums in Europe, many of which involve universities looking into bio-based resins.

However, as with all its business decisions, Logoplaste brings its characteristic pragmatism. Inventing a viable alternative to plastic is just the first step. Next comes “the ability to create the right structure, to create the recycling stream, mature the technology and improve the materials over a period of time,” Correia explained.

Being “intelligent and understanding the potential of the material” means instead of trying to make these alternatives compete directly on the market with plastics like polyethylene, finding instead a niche where they can grow. “Otherwise, you will probably kill these materials in their

first days of life, because you have not chosen the right space for them to mature.”

### **Having The Bottle**

With regards to dry molded fiber, Correia said “we all understand that it’s new. It’s not mature, it’s a growing technology. What’s important is to understand the potential of the technology and give it space.”

The main thing, for Correia, is that there is a “willingness on the part of the companies that we are working with to develop this technology into an industrial solution.”

Joining the Bottle Collective make sense for Logoplaste, he said, to “see how far we can go with this platform.”