

Creating a World Without Waste

By Jacqueline Sarah Scibetta

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Landfills overflow with debris of plastic and paper, storm drains collect waste polluting the vital waterways, and our carbon footprint only continues to increase. Weighing at more than 87,000 tons, the amorphous vortex of trash known as the Great Pacific Garbage Patch, lies in the center of the Pacific Ocean, expanding every year to collect more particles. The previously mentioned are just some examples of how the world is experiencing a direct threat from excess consumer waste, creating the urgency for sustainable solutions. As a nation, we are generating more garbage than we know what to do with.

In 2018 alone, the total generation of municipal solid waste was 292.2 million tons or 4.9 pounds per person per day. Of the MSW generated, approximately 69 million tons were recycled and 25 million tons were composted (EPA). Out of all the waste generated from 2018, only 24% of it was recycled and only 8% was composted. Citizens of the United States need to begin eliminating their wasteful practices and implementing new ones that reduce the amount of waste sent to landfills and incinerators. Both consumption and waste have major environmental impacts. “Producing goods and transporting them to consumers uses large quantities of fossil fuels and produces pollution, particularly carbon dioxide, the major greenhouse gas leading to climate change. When these products become waste, they are transported again—usually to landfills, where they produce methane, another potent greenhouse gas, as they break down—or to incinerators, which generate more pollution as they burn.” (NWF).

If we do not change our course of action soon, our planet and water supply will only continue to decay. As a company that produces beverages in plastic bottles and cans, The Coca-Cola company shares partial responsibility for the issue at hand. In response to this

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concern, the Coca-Cola Company shares an industry leading goal to significantly boost its use of reusable packaging. By 2030 the company aims to have at least 25% of all beverages globally across its portfolio of brands sold in refillable/returnable glass or plastic bottles, or in refillable containers through traditional fountain or Coca-Cola Freestyle dispensers (Dinkins). They envision a future where all plastic bottles and aluminum cans are continuously recycled in a circular ecosystem.

Finding solutions to decrease the carbon footprint and increase the use of recycling is the current focus of The Coca-Cola's Company's World Without Waste initiative because of the proven high track record of reusable containers. "As the Ellen MacArthur Foundation (EMF) notes in its *Reuse: Rethinking Packaging* report, converting 20% of global plastic packaging into reuse models is a \$10 billion business opportunity that benefits customers and represents a crucial element in the quest to eliminate plastic waste and pollution" (MacArthur). Since Coca-Cola launched their World Without Waste campaign in January 2018, the initiative has underwritten and implemented new recycling campaigns, as well as reinvented existing ones, from Estonia to Australia, Kenya to the US, adhering to the values of a closed-loop circular economy. This creates a system where all plastic packaging the company produces is designed to be recycled, kept in the economy, and reused in new food and beverage packaging.

While there seems to be a simple solution to climate change, the first step is getting the recycling part right. In reality, people are lazy, but also confused when it comes to recycling considering over 34% of the national population lacks understanding and access. But these barriers are no reason to give up, studies show "returnable glass bottles and refillable PET currently represent more than 50% of The Coca-Cola Company's product sales in more than 20 markets, and more than 25% of sales in another 20 markets" (PET). With the help of collecting

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recycled items, recyclables can then be sent to a recovery facility to be sorted, cleaned and processed into materials that can be used in manufacturing (EPA).

The Coca-Cola Company believes in creating a world without waste. One that will bring people together to support a healthy, debris-free environment. The carbon footprint humans have created is taking a large toll on our planet and we need to save what is left of it. By increasing the use of recycling and refillable materials, one can benefit both the environment and their wallet.

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