

Distell extends its glass recycling project

Listed wines and spirits producer and marketer Distell said on Monday, 26 July 2010, that it's continuing to lighten its impact on the environment with a new returnable glass project that follows close on the heels of its recently launched campaign to light-weight the company's wine and cid bottles.



Called 'Give Back Get Back', the glass recycling initiative aims to accelerate glass bottle returns, in the process curtailing waste, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and cutting down on the use of electricity.

It is encouraging greater involvement by the retail and on-consumption trade, as well as the general public by paying for every bottle returned by up to four times more than for cullet glass.

Cullet glass is the term used to describe recycled container glass derived from broken receptacles that are crushed before being made up into new glass containers.

Spot the logo

Give Back Get Back spans all product categories in which Distell is involved and covers 63 different products across nearly 150 bottle sizes. Each bottle eligible for the programme carries an easily recognisable logo featuring a bottle encircled by an arrow.

Frans Booysen, who is running the campaign, said the company pays its trade customers for each bottle returned anywhere from 80 cents to R1.50 per bottle, depending on the type and size. Retailers then pay their customers for bottles they return.

"Retailers can elect to pay all or part of what they receive, to the people who bring back bottles bearing the logo. Obviously, the more they pay their customers, the greater the uptake by the public and the greater the success of the campaign."

Programme network

Booyesen said the programme also works through a network of over 1600 bottle merchants nationwide, who return bottles to the company. Once delivered to Distell, they are sorted and cleaned and their labels removed before undergoing several washing and rinsing cycles, after which they are quality checked. Only those that meet the stringent standards set, are they sent for refilling.

He added that the initiative also helps to contain operating costs and maintain the company's price competitiveness in an environment in which the cost of dry goods continues to escalate, as bottles can be re-used repeatedly, up to 10 times, in some cases.

"We are equipped to re-use bottles across our product portfolio at three of our plants - at Wadeville, Gree Park in the Western Cape and Port Elizabeth. Between July 2009 and June 2010, we were able to re-use 132.3 million bottles, in the process saving a total of 73,268 tons of glass, representing 111 079 tons of CO2 equivalent emissions had new bottles been produced."

Tandem effort

Give Back Get Back operates in tandem with other beverage industry efforts to recycle glass through the Glass Recycling Company (GRC) of which Distell is a shareholder. In this instance, glass bottles are crushed as cullet glass for return to glass manufacturers. In addition, those of Distell's bottles not deemed appropriate for re-use, will continue to go through the GRC for crushing.

"Distell serves on the board of GRC and provides a substantial portion of the funding for this job-creation venture which also works towards improving recycling levels through public awareness, capacity-building initiatives and the provision of infrastructure, such as glass banks where people can take waste glass for recycling."

Expected increase

Booyesen added that the company has been involved in glass recycling initiatives for more than 20 years but that the new venture is aimed at increasing the present return ratio of 60% to 65% within the next year.

"We are currently involved in a nationwide educational initiative targeting off- and on-consumption trade. The Give Back Get Back campaign is being supported by extensive merchandising material.

For the 12 months to June 2010, Distell also saved 333.5 tons of glass by light-weighting 2.9 million wine bottles. This was achieved by reducing the weight of the average 750ml bottle from 570 grams to 455 grams across the wine range.