Dutch Waste Management Association

Annual Review **2019**

CONTENTS

About this publication

The Annual Review 2019 looks back on some of the important developments during the year.

Text and editing: Dutch Waste Management Association, Daniëlle van Vleuten
Translation: Derek Middleton, Zevenaar
Design: ontwerpburo suggestie & illusie

June 2020

Dutch Waste Management Association
P.O. Box 2184
5202 CD 's-Hertogenbosch
t. + 31 73 627 94 44
e. info@dwma.eu
www.verenigingafvalbedrijven.nl
www.wastematters.eu

Dutch Waste Management Association
Partner in the circular economy

Our industry is carrying on **healthily** and **safely**

We were busy dealing with the consequences of the PFAS policy, gearing up for renewed discussions with the government on abolishing the tax on imported waste and our alternative plan for carbon reduction, making preparations for the 14th National Compost Day and evaluating the impact of a CO_2 tax on our sector – and then, at the end of February, we were suddenly confronted by the coronavirus outbreak in the Netherlands. The seriousness of the situation soon became clear. We took our responsibilities seriously, as did our members. We set about implementing the measures needed to continue our work and to minimise the chances of contamination and further spread of the coronavirus.

It is essential that the work we do in our sector can always go ahead. Waste must be collected and treated; sorting, recycling and sewage activities cannot be brought to a standstill. Our industry is needed to help keep society functioning, which is why the government immediately designated us a 'vital sector'. Our members and the DWMA secretariat have done everything in their power to ensure that our work goes on. We hold weekly meetings to coordinate activities and resolve any hick-ups, and have often had to consult with government on the measures to be taken to guarantee continuity and the health and safety of our key workers and others.

I am proud of all the men and women who have kept working through this difficult time. Our streets have remained clean and tidy, and waste is still being collected and turned into new raw materials and energy. We thought it was important to inform the public and so we made use of the air time offered to us on TV and radio to express our appreciation and encouragement to all employees in the industry. It is fantastic how the industry has pulled together to ensure it can continue to operate in the 'one-and-a-half-metre society'. Last month we drew up a protocol for this new reality in a joint process with

employee, employer and industry organisations. Together we are making sure that we can carry on working – healthily and safely.

Looking back on 2019 seems a bit strange now. But we continue to work on the transition to the circular economy – even during the corona crisis – and remain active on all fronts. In this annual review we highlight the issues that occupied us the most in 2019.

Boris van der Ham
President of the Dutch Waste Management Association

Unwavering **focus** on the **quality** of **recycling streams**

The DWMA continues to urge vigilance about maintaining and improving the quality of separately collected waste streams to ensure that recycled materials can be reused in the manufacture of high-grade products. A loss of quality will hamper the transition to a circular economy. In 2019 the DWMA, Rijkswaterstaat (the government's executive agency for environment, infrastructure and water management) and the Association for Refuse and Cleansing Management (NVRD) drew up a plan to improve the quality of food and garden waste (FGW) and recover more of it from household residual waste. The plan also emphasises the importance of clean recycling streams.

Research by Rijkswaterstaat has made it clear that FGW collection and treatment is susceptible to contamination. That is why FGW is designated a priority waste stream in the government's 'From Waste to Raw Material' (VANG) municipal waste programme. An action plan presented by Rijkswaterstaat, the DWMA and NVRD in the summer of 2019 targets increased collection of cleaner FGW. FGW still makes up about a third of all household residual waste, mostly in the form of left-over food and kitchen waste.

Action plan for more and cleaner FGW

One of the many activities and projects included in the action plan is the organisation of a conference for all partners in the FGW chain. The conference was held in November 2019 in Utrecht and focused on the importance of good quality FGW as a raw material for the production of compost and how all parties can work together to achieve this. At the conference the DWMA presented the results of its analysis of samples of collected FGW indicating that FGW is increasingly contaminated, adversely affecting the production of compost and green gas. This further emphasises the need for constant attention to quality. One of the other actions in the plan is setting up a national FGW Yes/No list for households, which should

be available in the first half of 2020.

Quality of other waste streams

Declining quality is not just an issue with FGW. Contamination levels of separately collected textiles, plastic, glass and paper are also rising. Studies show that this is a result of the focus on reducing the volume of residual waste. The DWMA has for many years stressed the importance of clean recycling streams. Separating wastes only makes sense when the collected materials are actually recycled and reused, which is difficult or impossible if recycling streams are of poor quality and the resulting materials are much less able to compete with primary raw materials. Maintaining the quality of the collected materials is crucial for keeping recycled materials in the life cycle and using them in the manufacture of high-grade products. In a series of articles the DWMA has highlighted where the problems lie and how they can be resolved.

See also:

- Paper recycling industry raises the quality bar (last article in the series with links to the previous articles)

Sector alternative to **import tax** will deliver **carbon reductions**

Just before the summer of 2019 the waste sector was unpleasantly surprised by the introduction of an import tax on foreign waste. The DWMA campaigned to have the tax abolished and presented an alternative plan to deliver the CO_2 emission reductions the tax is supposed to achieve.

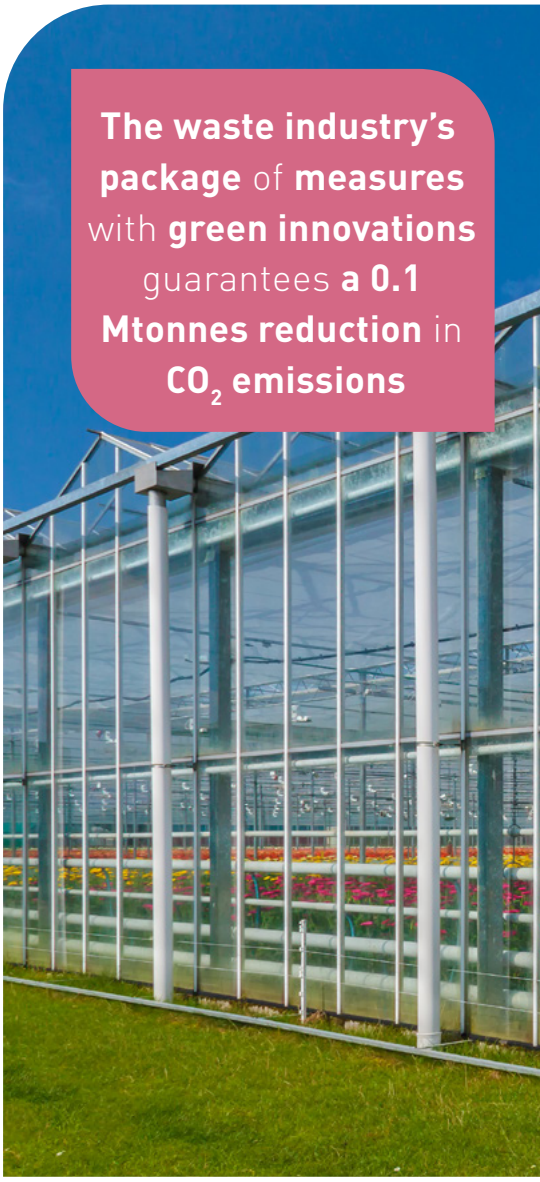
The government set out its proposals for a tax on the treatment of foreign residual waste in its Tax Plan 2020. The measure is the government's response to the Urgenda ruling (the court case against the government forcing it to take further measures against climate change), under which it must cut greenhouse gas emissions by at least 25% by the end of 2020, compared with 1990 levels. The DWMA was unpleasantly surprised by the measure and is convinced that it will not deliver the desired emissions reduction.

Bad for the climate, the environment and the economy

The DWMA appointed PwC to investigate what effects the tax will have. The study clearly shows that it will have detrimental economic and environmental impacts. It will create investment uncertainties, which in turn will undermine both innovation and sustainability. It will lead to a reduction in sustainable energy generation in the Netherlands and an increase in landfill elsewhere, which will actually generate additional greenhouse gas emissions. Indirectly, it will make recycling more expensive and cause disruptions on the European market. Instead of reducing carbon emissions and tackling climate change, the measure will therefore have a negative impact on the transition to the circular economy.

Calculations too optimistic

According to the government the import tax will reduce emissions of CO_2 by 0.2 Mtonnes in 2020. The PwC study indicates that any net reductions would not be anywhere



The waste industry's package of **measures** with **green innovations** guarantees **a 0.1 Mtonnes reduction** in **CO_2 emissions**

near this amount, but would in fact be close to zero. The DWMA made every effort to convince the government that an import tax would only have losers. It also presented its case during a hearing in the House of Representatives on 1 October, but the government did not give way. After much insistence, the government announced how it had calculated the 0.2 Mtonnes CO_2 emission reductions. The calculation does not take proper account of the adverse effects of the energy that has to be generated by burning fossil fuels to replace the lost sustainable energy production by the waste-to-energy plants.

Alternative plan by the waste sector

The waste sector presented an alternative plan that *will* deliver a reduction in CO_2 emissions. The package of measures with green innovations guarantees a 0.1 Mtonnes reduction in CO_2 emissions in 2020. Unfortunately, there was too little time to evaluate the DWMA plan and so the House of Representatives and the Senate passed the Tax Plan 2020 and the import tax was introduced on 1 January 2020. During the debate in the Senate towards the end of 2019 the government promised to reopen discussions with the DWMA on the sector's alternative plan in 2020.

See also:
- Insufficient time to adopt waste sectors alternatieve CO_2 plan

Risk to humans and the environment **key indicator** for **substances** of **concern**

The DWMA is in absolute agreement with the aim of banning the use of substances of very high concern (SVHC) if they present a risk to human health and the environment. However, legislation should not present unnecessary obstacles to recycling. We are of the opinion that policy should take the actual risks of SVHC into account.

There are substances that we certainly do not want in the production and consumption chain. They must be sent for safe and environmentally sound treatment in waste-to-energy plants or isolated in landfills. However, circular economy regulations and rules on hazardous substances can get in each other's way. The government is setting ambitious recycling targets, but at the same time a growing number of substances present in products that are suitable for recycling are being classified as 'very high concern'. The DWMA urges the government to strike the right balance between recycling raw materials and preventing environmental emissions and the spread of hazardous substances. When determining whether or not the recycling of substances of concern is acceptable or not, we back what is called the risk approach. Such an approach does not just look at the characteristics of the substance in question, but is guided by the actual risks to human health and the environment.

European database for SVHC

Under the REACH Regulation (on registration, evaluation, authorisation and restriction of chemicals) and the Waste Framework Directive, in 2019 the European Commission started the construction of a database on SVHC in products and product parts. The information in the database is being supplied by manufacturers and is due to become available at the beginning of 2021. The purpose of the database is to

improve recycling by providing accurate information about SVHC. However, it will not contain information about the concentration of SVHC in the collected and treated waste streams. And as it is being filled with information on products that are currently being manufactured, neither will it contain information about older products that are found in recycling streams. Moreover, the information is at the product level, whereas recycling streams generally contain a mix of materials. Although it will be useful to have information available about SVHC, the data will not be in a form that can be used by recyclers without further processing and interpretation. The sector is of the opinion that the responsibility for identifying SVHC in recycling streams should not be laid at the feet of the waste industry.

SVHC committee

The lack of an adequate policy for SVHC affects waste companies in various ways. To address this issue, at the end of 2019 the DWMA established its own special SVHC committee. The committee will examine the problems arising from SVHC, assess what policy measures should be taken and determine the standpoint to be taken by the waste sector. Because almost all types of waste companies are affected by SVHC the committee contains representatives from all sections of the DWMA.

Recycling as the starting point for **design, production** and **purchase** of **products**

Recycling is a key element in the transition to the circular economy and the fight against climate change. The DWMA was one of the first parties to join the Global Recycling Foundation at the beginning of 2019 and took an active part in Global Recycling Day 2019.

The Global Recycling Federation (GRF) was established in October 2018 to promote and encourage recycling around the world. The DWMA supports the GRF because we want to play our part in the global shift from large-scale landfilling to recycling. We hope that many organisations will follow our example and join the GRF so that we can work together internationally.

Scoring goals for recycling

A major event in GRF's promotional activities is Global Recycling Day, which is held each year on 18 March. The theme for 2019 was 'Recycling into the Future', the main aim being to get everyone to see the value of more recycling. To inspire long-term recycling habits among young people in particular, GRF launched the #RecyclingGoals challenge, a social media campaign harnessing the popularity of football. In a video released in the run-up to Global Recycling Day, DWMA chair Boris van der Ham made an appeal for more recycling by literally 'scoring' a goal against waste. He called on everyone to take up the challenge and make a video with the same message.

Recycling as starting point

In the DWMA's vision for the transition to the circular economy, recycling is the starting point for the design, production and purchase of products. Too many products are still being made that cannot be recycled. During Global Recycling Day 2019 Boris van der Ham drew attention to this and called for less use of plastic, and if plastic is used it should be recyclable. That's why the DWMA is also a signatory to the Plastic Pact signed by in February 2019 by the Dutch government and many companies and organisations. They agreed to produce 20% less plastic packag-

ing by 2025 and improve the quality of the recycling of the remaining plastic to enable its reuse in higher grade products.

See also:

- Dutch and Swedish recycling industries pledge support to Global Recycling Foundation

How to separate waste

Another issue the DWMA highlighted during Global Recycling Day 2019 is that it is not always clear which waste belongs in which recycling stream. A consumer study for the DWMA shows that there is much confusion about this. The DWMA understands the problem and calls on the government and municipalities to provide better information on waste separation. The DWMA is also convinced that there are too many different collection systems for household waste. More clarity and consistency will lead to better quality separated streams, which will make recycling easier and bring us closer to the circular economy.

Health and **safety** demands **constant vigilance**

The sector pressed ahead with improving fire safety during 2019. All value chain partners want to see a nationwide concerted effort to prevent waste fires. The waste industry also helped to eradicate infestations of oak processionary moth caterpillars, and the DWMA and its members took part in the second Safety Week.

In 2019 the DWMA members drew up a list of fire prevention measures based on industry and insurance protocols. The list was then used to carry out self-inspection fire safety risk assessments of their sites, which were followed by a number of audits by peer companies. The results of these inspections and audits provide valuable information on where and how fire safety can be improved. By sharing best practices, our members learn from each other and are improving fire safety levels across the sector.

Value chain collaboration

Fire prevention requires input from all the parties in the waste chain. Waste fires start at waste companies, but the causes lie further back in the life cycle of the materials. During a meeting in September 2019, value chain partners took the initiative of setting up a national fire prevention task force. The task force was assembled by the Noord-Brabant provincial authority and waste industry associations.

Batteries often the cause of fires

A major cause of fires is the presence of lithium ion batteries in waste. The batteries can burst into flame and sometimes even explode if they are damaged – by loaders and other machines – but sometimes spontaneously. The relatively new lithium ion batteries are commonly found in consumer electronics. During National Recycling Week (14–21 October 2019), an initiative to boost to the recycling of e-waste, the DWMA drew attention to the importance of disposing of electronic goods in the right bin in order to prevent waste fires. The best solution is to discard the batteries separately.

Safety Week 2019

The DWMA and its members took part in the industry's second Safety Week, which the Health and Safety Catalogue for the Waste Sector Foundation holds each year in the first week of June, when waste

Sector offers helping hand to **AEB Amsterdam**

In summer 2019 AEB Amsterdam saw no other option to ensure the safety of its employees than to close four of its six incineration lines. The DWMA and its members offered a helping hand. Various operators created temporary buffer capacity for the incineration of the commercial waste and sewage sludge that AEB could no longer treat. Capacity was made available at several waste-to-energy plants by temporarily reducing imports of waste, mainly from the United Kingdom. Their clients were informed that in view the situation at AEB Amsterdam priority was being given to the Dutch market. The collection of waste was also briefly under threat. Not only household waste from Amsterdam and the surrounding area, but also commercial waste from offices, shops, hospitality establishments and other businesses elsewhere in the country was in danger of remaining uncollected. This was averted due to the support and considerable efforts of waste collection and treatment companies and the cooperation of the whole waste management industry.

companies throughout the country organise a variety of activities. For many of these companies it is an opportunity to stress the need for health and safety among their own staff, but activities also target contract or temporary staff, suppliers and visitors. During Safety Week 2019 the DWMA announced that the annual accident survey would be expanded by working with the Association for Refuse and Cleansing Management (NVRD). The results will then give a clearer picture of the number and nature of accidents during the treatment, recycling and also the collection of waste in the Netherlands.

Eradication of the oak processionary moth

In spring 2019 the Netherlands was plagued by infestations of oak processionary moth caterpillars. The sector helped with the eradication of caterpillar nests, taking care to ensure the safety of both workers and nearby residents. Spreading of the caterpillar hairs by the wind must be avoided because they can trigger allergic reactions and cause serious health problems. The caterpillars must therefore be properly contained. Working in a team with the government and landscaping contractors, the DWMA devised an appropriate solution and a protocol was drawn up for the safe containment, transport and destruction of the caterpillars. The team is working on a long-term solution to the problem.