



Helping global brands achieve their sustainability goals

Unilever has been working with Sonoco since 2003, and considers Sonoco one of its key North American suppliers for plastic bottles. When Unilever approached Sonoco about consulting on waste management, we used our expertise as a recycling leader to consult on best practices for the global corporations large-scale sustainability goals.

Sonoco Recycling annually collects more than 3 million tons of material, and we have experts who provide secure, reliable and innovative recycling solutions to residential and commercial customers. We operate recycling programs that identify waste reduction opportunities and reduce operating expenses for many of the largest consumer product companies in the United States.

Sonoco is a global provider of consumer packaging, industrial products and services, protective solutions and display and packaging services. From our headquarters in Hartsville, S.C., and more than 330 operations in 34 countries, we produce packaging for a variety of industries and many of the world's most recognized brands, serving customers in 85 nations.



The Challenge

Unilever has a strong track record of designing out waste from factories, and since 2012—when zero waste to landfill was added as a Unilever Sustainable Living Plan (USLP) target—the company has focused on embedding a “zero waste mind-set” to rapidly accelerate the speed of the global rollout, increase resource resilience and reach the goal of becoming totally landfill-free.

The Solution

To support Unilever in its large-scale goal, Sonoco consulted with the company on best practices, such as waste avoidance and treatment methods for personal care, ice cream and spreads manufacturing sites. Sonoco worked with Unilever to establish its first zero waste to landfill site, in Suffolk, Va. As a result of the ongoing partnership between Unilever and Sonoco, waste is pushed up the hierarchy as much as possible, rather than converting waste to energy.

As part of our 360° Solutions approach, Sonoco also works with Unilever to provide more sustainable packaging solutions, such as lightweight plastic bottles and reduced film gauges in flexible packaging. Serving Unilever throughout the packaging lifecycle supports their overall goal of reducing their carbon footprint throughout the supply chain.

To achieve zero-waste to landfill, Unilever adopted the four ‘R’ approach—reducing waste at source, then reusing, recovering or recycling any non-hazardous waste that remains. In January 2015, Unilever reached the significant milestone of sending zero non-hazardous waste to landfill across all global factories. Believed to be a first at this scale, more than 240 industrial sites in 67 countries making products for brands such as Magnum, Knorr, Dove and Domestos have now eliminated landfill waste.

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