**brand ownerS ACKNOWLEGE THE RELIABILITY OF STEEL, YET UNDERESTIMATE RECYCLING PERFORMANCE**

Eight out of 10 brand owners say steel provides the best damage resistance of any packaging material according to new research, launched at Interpack today (9 May).

Undertaken by UK-based Sheffield Hallam University, the study examined brand owners’ attitude towards the competing environmental claims of packaging materials and the considerations that influence their choice of material.

The study demonstrates the extensive environmental knowledge of many respondents who are either ‘familiar’ or ‘very familiar’ with processes such as lifecycle analysis, lightweighting, material substitution and recycling rates. 89% demonstrated awareness of steel as a permanent material that can be recycled without loss of quality within a closed material loop.

However the study found a certain number of inconsistencies when it came to the environmental performance of different materials.

Over half (58%) of those questioned said that recyclability affects their choice of packaging material, but only 48% of respondents say they emphasise the recyclability of their packaging when promoting their products.

And whilst many brand owners correctly identified the low Europe-wide recycling rates of flexible packs, pouches and composite materials, only 37% recognised that steel has the highest recycling rate of 74%. However 79% agreed that a universal minimum recycling rate of at least 50% should be established for packaging materials.

Indeed, the researchers found that when choosing packaging, a material’s visual appeal and perceived green credentials, often have more influence than a format’s real properties and recycling rate.

The data was gathered on behalf of APEAL, The Association of European Producers of Steel for Packaging, by Design Futures Packaging, a packaging design and research consultancy group based within Sheffield Hallam University.

Dr Alaster Yoxall, principal research fellow at the University who conducted the research said: “The results indicate that materials producers need to be more effective in communicating the real recycling and sustainability performance of their packaging materials to brand owners.

 “Whilst they acknowledge the importance of recyclability, it is apparent that innovation and visual appeal remain the main drivers behind their choice of packaging material, as opposed to a true assessment of which material has the ability to deliver the greatest environmental benefit.”

The study also found that misconceptions about steel extended into other areas. Whilst 82% of respondents identified steel as offering the best resistance to damage, only 5% recognised the fact that steel offers the longest shelf life of any packaging material and energy-efficient storage.

Alexander Mohr, Secretary General of Apeal said: “At a time when consumers are increasingly aware of and receptive to sustainability messages we are encouraging brand owners to place even greater emphasis on recyclability and performance to drive their packaging choices.”

He added: “In order to communicate the excellent environmental performance of Steel for Packaging to brand owners we are exhibiting at Interpack 2014 under the banner “Take a Fresh Look at Steel for Packaging.”

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**About APEAL**

APEAL - the Association of European Producers of Steel for Packaging is a federation of four multi-national producers of steel for packaging (ArcelorMittal, Tata Steel Packaging, ThyssenKrupp Rasselstein, U.S. Steel Košice). In total these four companies employ over 200,000 workers in Europe. Founded in 1986, APEAL represents today about 95% of the total European production of steel for packaging.

**About Steel for Packaging**

Steel is a unique packaging material, combining exceptional performance capabilities with unrivalled environmental credentials. Strong, formable and long-lasting, steel offers numerous benefits for the safe packaging of a wide variety of products.