

The race to deplastify

COMPANIES MUST TAKE THE PLUNGE



One year since nine major French companies were put on notice to reduce their use of plastic, their journey towards deplastification has not even begun.

DEPLASTIFY verbe. /verb. /di:'plæsti,fai/

The action of planning and implementing a drastic reduction in production and use of plastic throughout the value chain, in line with the principles of the circular economy¹.

Last year, nine companies from the food and beverage sector were put on legal notice by Surfrider Foundation Europe, ClientEarth and Zero Waste France to reduce their plastic use.

Today, one year on, we decided to measure their progress, only to discover that most have yet to truly embark on their journey.

To measure their performances, we lined up our companies as swimmers, ready to compete in an olympic scale race towards deplastification. Sadly, our athletes remain on the sidelines. While most companies now have a better grasp of the risks associated with plastic, and acknowledge the pressing need to 'deplastify', they are still failing to take real action.

The time for hesitation is over. We need these household names to take the plunge.

1. For the European Sustainability Reporting Standards (ESRS), the circular economy is defined as follows: 'An economic system in which the value of products, materials and other resources is maintained for as long as possible, enhancing their efficient use in production and consumption, thereby reducing the environmental impact of their use, minimising waste and the release of hazardous substances at all stages of their life cycle, and in accordance with the waste hierarchy.' (Quote). [European Commission, annex to the Commission Delegated Regulation \(EU\) .../... supplementing Directive 2013/34/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards sustainability reporting standards, page 9.](#) Furthermore, the European Commission provides a hierarchy of circularity strategies or principles, in which 'refuse' is in the first position, and 'recycling' is in the ninth (and last) position. [European Commission, "Categorisation system for the circular economy", 2020, page 7.](#)

WE ARE INUNDATED BY PLASTIC FROM BIG FOOD GIANTS

The companies we put on notice - Auchan, Carrefour, Casino, Nestlé France, McDonald's France, Picard Surgelés, les Mousquetaires, Lactalis, and Danone - are heavy users of plastic. Known in particular for the large quantities of single-use plastic packaging – think yoghurt pots and plastic bottles - they put on our shelves and tables every year.

However, their packaging is just the tip of the iceberg.

In the shadows lurk a multitude of other plastics across the whole value chain. These include logistics packaging, agricultural and industrial plastics, plastics used by employees, suppliers and distributors, the list goes on.

Together, it is clear that these companies have an extraordinary dependence on plastic, a material that is wreaking severe damage on our environment and human health.

2. OECD, ["The global plastics outlook: economic drivers, environmental impacts and policy options"](#), 2022, page 14.
3. Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations, ["Assessment of Agricultural Plastics and their Sustainability"](#), 2021.
4. Minderoo Foundation, ["Plastic Waste Makers Index 2023"](#), 2023.
5. The Pew Charitable Trusts and Systemiq, ["Breaking the plastic wave: A comprehensive assessment of pathways towards stopping ocean plastic pollution"](#), 2020. This study demonstrates that if plastic production continues to grow in line with industry projections, emissions from the plastic lifecycle will account for 19% of the carbon budget by 2040, significantly undermining our ability to uphold the Paris Agreement.
6. Marcos Orellana, ["Report of the Special Rapporteur on the implications for human rights of the environmental sound management and disposal of hazardous substances and wastes: The stages of the plastics cycle and their impacts on human rights"](#), 2021, A/76/207.
7. H Wiesinger, Z Wang and S Hellweg, ["Deep dive into plastic monomers, additives and processing aids"](#), Environ. Sci. Technol., 2021, 55, 13, 9339-9351.
8. LC Jenner et al, ["Detection of microplastics in human lung tissue using µFTIR spectroscopy"](#), Science of the Total Environment, 821, 2022, 154907.
9. Minderoo Foundation, ["The price of plastic pollution: Social costs and corporate liabilities"](#), 2022.
10. ["Report of the Special Rapporteur on the implications for human rights of the environmental sound management and disposal of hazardous substances and wastes: The stages of the plastics cycle and their impacts on human rights"](#), 2021.

Throughout its lifecycle, plastic has serious impacts on the environment, human health, and human rights.

Since its invention, plastic use has grown at the expense of our planet and the health of our population. It also negatively impacts human rights.

Plastics release hazardous substances that contribute to climate change and contaminate our air, water and soil. In 2019 alone, 22 million tonnes of plastic – equivalent to 2178 Eiffel Towers – were discharged into the environment according to the OECD².

Crucial marine ecosystems are especially vulnerable to the increasing presence of plastics. Once they sink into the depths of the ocean, plastics accumulate and break down, endangering marine species and contaminating the entire food chain by releasing chemical additives. Marine ecosystems are not the only ones affected. According to the FAO, our soils are even more contaminated by plastic pollution than our oceans³.

From production to end of life, plastic accounts for significant emissions.

In 2021, single-use plastic resulted in greenhouse gas emissions equivalent to those produced by the United Kingdom.⁴ At this rate, growing plastic production is seriously jeopardising our chances of meeting the Paris Climate Agreement⁵.

It is not, however, just our planet that suffers at the hands of plastic pollution – it harms our own health too. Throughout their lifecycle toxic chemicals which are a growing source of concern⁶. Among the 10,000 chemicals used

to manufacture plastics, nearly a quarter have been identified as potentially hazardous to human health.⁷ 'Microplastic pollution' is now a growing area of concern as they have been identified in some of the most remote areas of the planet, in numerous animal species - and even inside the human body. Concerningly, microplastics commonly used in packaging have recently been discovered in human lungs⁸.

The burden imposed on society by plastics is overwhelming: it is estimated that costs incurred due to plastic pollution, including cleaning, ecosystem degradation, health impacts, and medical treatments, exceed US \$100 billion per year.⁹ Plastic production and disposal facilities (such as petrochemical plants, landfills and recycling or incineration plants) can have severe impacts on frontline communities as they contaminate the air, water, and soil, compromising the communities' rights to live in a healthy environment. In 2021, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on toxic substances and human rights stated that the lifecycle of plastics 'has become a global threat to human rights'.¹⁰

The impacts of plastic on our planet and its inhabitants are severe and diverse, and it is no longer enough to only recognize plastic waste as the problem. We must be aware of all its impacts and take the appropriate action.

As significant corporate users of plastics, companies have a key role to play in resolving this crisis. Faced with the proliferation of plastic and growing concerns from civil society and institutions, the predominant industry response can be summarized in one word: recycling. In recent years, we've witnessed an explosion of plastic packaging labelled as 'recyclable' or 'recycled' yet global plastic pollution shows no signs of slowing. In a world where plastic production almost doubled between 2000 and 2019, and is anticipated to triple by 2060, the status quo is no longer acceptable. We know that only 9% of plastics ever made have been recycled¹¹ - it is clear that the approach is not working.

To tackle this crisis, companies must reduce their plastic at source - they must deplastify

DEPLASTIFICATION IS THE PRIORITY

The plastic crisis cannot be solved through recycling alone. The OECD states that "the current lifecycle of plastics is far from circular"¹². In 2019, less than 14% of plastic waste was recycled in the European Union, and less than 9% globally,¹³ which is deeply inadequate.

How can this be explained? Despite decades of research and development, numerous types of plastics are still not recyclable. The diversity of plastics, additives, and material combinations makes mechanical recycling of many types of plastic challenging, especially flexible and multi-material packaging.

'Chemical recycling' technologies, which are still at a nascent stage of development, fail to offer a satisfactory solution for many of these harder to recycle plastics.¹⁴ Even when the right technology is available and plastic is collected, recycling is still very expensive when compared to the cost of producing virgin plastic. The closed-loop system that many of us imagine recycling to be is still a utopia, as the process continuously degrades the material properties of plastic and its polymers inevitably undergo chemical degradation. As a result, only 2% of plastic is recycled more than once.¹⁵ In short, a plastic item is almost always destined to become waste. Recycling is merely a way to postpone the disposal process.

Recycling must be improved and encouraged, but it cannot be seen as a primary solution to solve the problem. .

So, what should be done?

Strategies focused solely on plastic recycling or cleaning up waste in the environment will fall short of addressing the plastic crisis unless they are accompanied by serious reduction at source. A 2020 study¹⁶ assessed whether the most ambitious and well-developed recycling system conceivable could limit plastic pollution.

It concluded that, even in the best-case scenario, the amount of plastic entering the ocean would still increase unless recycling is accompanied by actions aimed at limiting plastic production.

Reducing plastic production could also be crucial in the fight against climate change. Projections suggest that, if nothing changes, the plastic industry will account for 32% of the total carbon budget to limit warming to 1.5 degrees by 2050. To stay below 1.5 degrees, the demand for plastic materials must decrease by 3% annually, which would entail a halving of annual production between now and 2050.¹⁷

Given the severity, complexity, and irreversible nature of the impacts of plastic on the environment, health, and human rights, the scientific community consistently recommends the swift reduction of plastic production as the only way to truly address the plastic crisis¹⁸ .

The conclusions are clear: plastic production and usage must be reduced.

11. OCDE, "Plastic pollution has not stopped growing while waste management and recycling lags behind", 2022.
12. OCDE, "The global plastics outlook: economic drivers, environmental impacts and policy options", 2022, 13.
13. OCDE, "Plastic pollution has not stopped growing while waste management and recycling lags behind", 2022

14. Chemical recycling is not only energy intensive, but it can also pose even greater health issues for consumers by releasing more toxic chemicals. S. Gerassimidou et al, "Unpacking the complexity of the pet drink bottles value chain: a chemicals perspective", 2022, journal of hazardous materials,
15. Surfrider Foundation Europe, "be wary of well-intentioned but misguided ideas: relying on recycling to eliminate all our plastic waste", 2020,
16. The Pew Charitable Trusts and Systemiq, "Breaking the plastic wave: A comprehensive assessment of pathways towards stopping ocean plastic pollution", 2020.
17. Eunomia et Zero Waste Europe, "Is Net Zero enough for the material production sector? Analysing the decarbonisation pathways for key material sectors and their ability to meet global carbon budgets", 2022.
18. Erikson et al, "A growing plastic smog, now estimated to be over 170 trillion plastic particles afloat in the world's oceans - Urgent solutions required" PLOS ONE, 2023.

Large companies must be vigilant on plastic

The Duty of Vigilance law requires the largest French companies to exercise vigilance over the impact their activities have on the environment and people throughout their entire value chain.¹⁹ For companies that contribute to plastic pollution, this includes their impacts in terms of plastics. Given the limitations of recycling as a solution to the problem, a drastic reduction in their use of plastic is the only way to curb the crisis. We therefore consider that such companies have a duty to deplastify in order to comply with the Duty of Vigilance law.

Welcome onboard the race to deplastify!

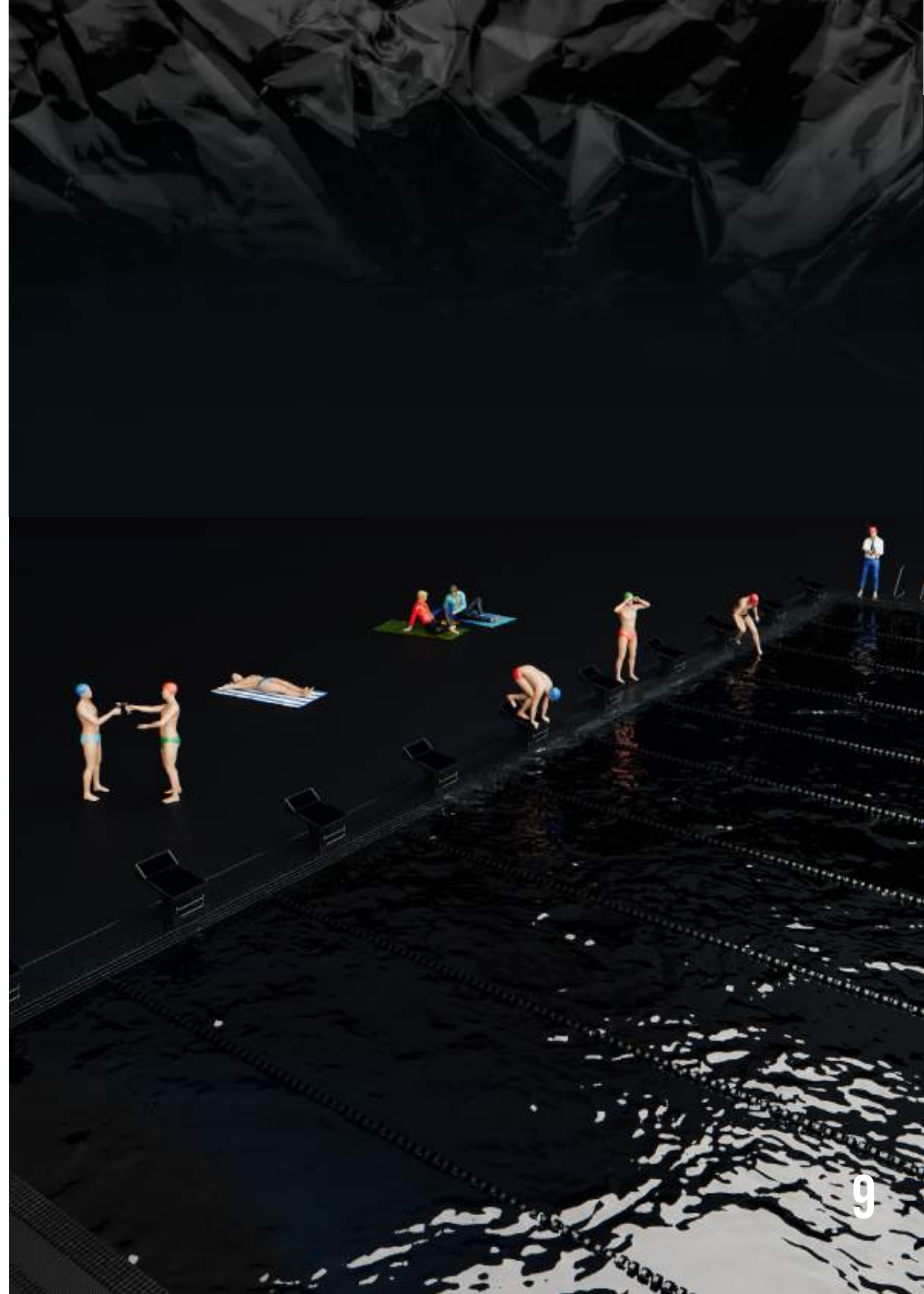
For companies, deplastifying is like swimming at the Olympics. It is a highly demanding race that calls for preparation, self-awareness, stamina and determination on the part of every competing athlete.

We issued our first warning in September 2022, when we put these nine companies on notice. Our swimmers - Auchan, Carrefour, Casino, Nestlé France, McDonald's France, Picard Surgelés, les Mousquetaires, Lactalis, and Danone – had not even shown up for the race. The companies had either not addressed deplastification in their vigilance plans at all, or only superficially. Here's what we observed :

- Five companies had published inadequate vigilance plans that did not consider the scale and gravity of the plastic crisis.
- One of these companies, Danone, did not mention plastic at all in their vigilance plan.
- Four companies had not published a vigilance plan at all.

The room for improvement was immense, as were our expectations for these companies to up their game.

¹⁹. [LAW No. 2017-399 of March 27, 2017, regarding the duty of vigilance of parent companies and contracting companies](#)



THE FOUR GOLDEN RULES TO OPTIMISE YOUR SWIM



UNDERSTAND the stakes of the race to deplastify

What is the key ingredient of a winning mindset? Motivation, of course. Without it, the race is most likely lost from the start. As the use of plastic causes significant harm to the environment, human health, and human rights, companies must embark on deplastifying their business with total determination.

Companies must properly map out all the impacts that their plastic use has on the environment, human health, and human rights throughout its lifecycle. Fully understanding the issues involved will help ensure that you invest the necessary energy to win this race against time and avoid failure with far-reaching consequences.

For a **truly** vigilant plan: identify all risks to the environment, human health and human rights associated with the use of plastic throughout its lifecycle.



MEASURE the size of the pool

The race to deplastify is really about challenging yourself, not everyone has the same distance to cover.

How much plastic does your company use today? What effort will you have to make to deplastify? The best way to tackle this is to publish a comprehensive assessment of the use of plastic that addresses all plastics used by the company, whether they're virgin, recycled or bioplastics. For retailers, this includes both own-brand plastic packaging, as well as the packaging of branded goods that they stock on their shelves.²⁰

And it's not just about packaging! Companies rely on a variety of hidden plastics for production, transportation and marketing of its products, which should also be eliminated.

For a **truly** vigilant plan: put together a comprehensive plastic assessment that tots up all plastics - virgin, recyclable, recycled or bioplastics - used by the company across its entire value chain.

Here are the golden rules to successfully navigate your journey towards deplastification.

Adhering to these rules will enable companies to confidently meet the requirements of the Duty of Vigilance law:



PLAN AND IMPLEMENT a detailed race plan

You don't go into an important race without strategy and discipline, or by recklessly relying on luck to succeed.

Just as a race demands specific performance and time goals, each company must set solid deadlines and quantifiable plastic reduction objectives. The scope of the deplastification strategy must reflect the urgency of the task and the extent of the company's current dependence on plastic. It should also identify and deploy the requisite financial and human resources to ensure success.

For a **truly** vigilant plan: establish a deplastification trajectory based on your comprehensive plastic assessment. Outline ambitious plastic reduction goals and an action plan on how you will get there. Use all the resources available to you to achieve these objectives!



KEEP AN EYE on the timer

Unlucky swimmers can unexpectedly cramp up during a race. Although there's no substitute for meticulous planning, keeping an eye on the clock, coupled with diligent monitoring of performance, will help identify obstacles that arise during the race so that you can make up for lost time.

This might mean switching up the tech or the initial game plan, teaming up to overcome a technical hurdle, giving customers a heads-up about changes, and more. But stay on the ball! Just like a swimmer keeps a close eye on the time, it's better to regularly check your performance, transparently share your progress, acknowledge any obstacles that arise and act swiftly to avoid wasting time and energy.

For a **truly** vigilant plan: check in on the effectiveness of measures implemented. If there's a delay, readjust the strategy and deploy the necessary resources to catch up.

What it does it really take to deplastify?

For Big Food companies, the road to deplastification is already well-paved. Close examination of a company's use of plastics through a thorough assessment will help reveal the strategies to implement. For packaging, which accounts for a significant proportion of companies' plastic footprint in the food and consumer goods sectors, there are four standout strategies:

• Eliminate packaging

Thanks to the French 'AGEC' law, numerous fruits and vegetables in France have recently been stripped of their packaging, with modifications to logistics processes making this possible. With the development of modern, consumer-friendly sections for purchasing products in bulk and free of packaging, a number of grocery products could see their plastic packaging disappear.

• Redesign products to eliminate the need for packaging

For example, some companies have already designed products such as solid soaps, shampoos and conditioners so that they do not require packaging at all.

• Invest in reusable packaging

To maximise impact, reusable packaging systems should use standardised sizes and deposit systems, so that consumers can return the packaging to be reused. For decades, some beverages have been sold in reusable packaging, many other product categories could follow suit.

• Offer refill options

For certain product categories, consumers may want the option to bring their own containers to stores to refill.

The primary objective of the deplastification transition is to eliminate single-use plastic. For this reason, we have not included bioplastics, lighter packaging or improved recyclability on our agenda. We want companies to give deplastification their full attention.

The good news is, solutions already exist. In recent years, modern tools for reuse and bulk logistics have emerged, driven by a network of startups, entrepreneurs, communities, and associations ready to take on the challenge of deplastification.²¹

The effective implementation of these strategies requires careful planning, investment and, above all, good collaboration between the various players in the food and beverage sector, including suppliers, processors and distributors.

Finally, it's not just consumer packaging that can and should disappear. These strategies should be extended to logistics – where reusable packaging is already widely used by many companies – as well as plastics used in offices, product promotion and distribution, and even further upstream to the industrial and agricultural manufacturing processes.

Adhering to these golden rules is crucial for companies to succeed in the journey towards deplastification. In 2022, the 2021 vigilance plans of Auchan, Carrefour, Casino, Nestlé France, McDonald's France, Picard Surgelés, les Mousquetaires, Lactalis, and Danone were closely examined by our experts. The results were concerning.

One year on, how did the second round of the race to deplastify unfold?

Let's return to our pool to assess how the nine companies that were alerted last year have progressed and assess their chances of success.

21. No Plastic in My Sea, ["500 solutions à la pollution plastique et 12 recommandations"](#).



NINE INEXPERIENCED SWIMMERS BY THE POOLSIDE

A year has passed, and it is clear that the companies we put on notice are slow to dive into deplastification.

But beneath the avalanche of information about recycling, acknowledgement of the need to deplastify is finally breaking through. Gradually, we are seeing greater recognition of the multiple risks associated with plastic in the companies' vigilance plans. We are also seeing narratives emerging that highlight reduction of plastics at source, as well as a growing spotlight on new initiatives aimed at removing or substituting plastic.

While the incomplete assessments of plastic use provided, and modest plastic reduction targets, remain far from sufficient, these moves do indicate a significant shift.

The urgency is clear and companies seem to be gradually realising that they have no choice but to reduce their plastic usage.

Unfortunately, while the understanding of the problem has evolved, concrete action is still lacking. A review of their latest vigilance plans shows that our swimmers are still novices in this critical competition.

While companies are legally obliged to explain how they mitigate risks related to their activities in their vigilance plans, the information provided on their plastic-related impacts is still deeply insufficient. This means the race is starting on rather shaky ground:

- **Numerous false starts.** By over-investing in less effective strategies such as recycling, at the expense of plastic reduction solutions like bulk or reuse, companies are going round in circles and wasting energy.
- **A deeply problematic addiction to single-use plastic.** Companies addicted to single-use plastic seem to think it will enhance their performance, but it actually increases the risk of getting into troubled waters.
- **A concerning lack of commitment.** To date, not a single participant has published a clear deplastification trajectory to guide their race.

Beyond their Duty of Vigilance obligations, some companies choose to voluntarily communicate about plastic in other areas, such as on their website or in their annual report. This information does not form part of their vigilance plan, nor respond to their obligations under this law. Nevertheless, we have also dived into this information to see if details on deplastification were lurking outside the vigilance plans. We were disappointed. Our main observations for information provided outside the vigilance plan by each company are summarized in 'Our Prognosis'.



AUCHAN A HESITANT SWIMMER

A year ago, we put Auchan on notice because we considered its 2021 vigilance plan²² unsatisfactory. Auchan published its 2022 vigilance plan²³ in the first half of 2023.

Our view on the 2022 vigilance plan

While the severity of plastic-related risks is acknowledged by Auchan in its latest vigilance plan²⁴, the action plans to mitigate them fall short of addressing the magnitude of the issue.



1 UNDERSTANDING

Is the severity of the issue understood? The 'plastic-related risks' – previously categorized as 'minor' – are now considered 'major'.

Are the impacts of plastic understood?

- Impacts on the environment: partially. The previous year, Auchan limited the risk to the end of life of 'non-recyclable packaging'. This year, the 'risks related to plastics' are included in the 'environment' category, but without details on the diversity of environmental impacts of plastic.
- Impacts on human rights: no, still omitted.
- Health impacts: still omitted.

Does the analysis explicitly consider the entire life cycle of plastic? No.

2 MEASUREMENT

No assessment of plastic use. The only data provided about Auchan's plastic usage concerns 'plastic packaging used in catering... in the EU' (office translation) which is far from sufficient to provide a comprehensive view of the group's plastic usage.

3 PLAN AND IMPLEMENTATION

No deplastification trajectory. The plan lists some actions related to combating plastic pollution, which is an improvement on last year's plan, which did not mention any concrete measures. Some of these actions are at least partially related to reduction of plastic at source, but the listed actions do not come close to a clear and measurable deplastification trajectory.

4 MONITORING

No monitoring of plastic reduction. Some performance indicators are provided, but they do not allow for tracking the overall plastic reduction of the group.

22. ELO, 2021 vigilance plan, publié en 2022,
23. ELO, 2022 vigilance plan, publié en 2023,
24. Ibid.

OUR PROGROSIS

In its annual report for 2022, Auchan seems to touch upon the need for change: 'the linear model that this marketing has generated - extract - produce - consume - dispose is not sustainable, particularly given that the majority of plastic is not recycled,' (office translation)²⁵ and shares a number of initiatives relating to plastic reduction. However, the group's desplastification strategy is far from clear and convincing.

Auchan reports usage of only 39,000 tonnes of plastic, including 27,000 tonnes of packaging, 6,500 tonnes of plastics used in market areas (stalls and fruits/vegetables), and 5,600 tonnes of plastic bags.²⁶ These calculations underestimate the quantities of plastic used by the group in the following ways:

- The figures only include the European Union, excluding countries like Senegal and Ivory Coast where Auchan is present, and which are particularly vulnerable to plastic pollution.
- Only plastic packaging and bags are counted, which excludes plastic-containing items such as toys, clothing, kitchen utensils, office supplies, etc. The 'hidden' plastics in the value chain are also absent.
- Only Auchan-branded packaging is accounted for, which means plastics associated with branded goods, like Coca-Cola, L'Oréal, Cristalline, etc., that are sold by Auchan, are omitted.

For the first time Auchan has this year shared a somewhat vague plastic reduction target: '[less] 20,000 tonnes by 2024 (equivalent to -10% in the food sector and -50% in the non-food sector based on 2021)' (office translation).²⁷ This indicator remains unsatisfactory for several reasons:

- The 2021 'food' and 'non-food' baselines are not disclosed, making it difficult for third parties to track the achievement of these objectives. The plastic tonnages shared in the annual report are not broken down in the same way (i.e. food and non-food), even though presumably the company has calculated this breakdown internally.
- No methodology for the calculation has been provided. Is this an annual reduction target or a cumulative one over three years? Does the target relate only to packaging or does it also include items that contain plastic? This reductionist approach to reporting may suggest a lack of genuine motivation.
- The indicator seems to represent the avoided weight of plastics that were not produced. But if, at the same time, the company grows or introduces new products that heavily rely on plastic, then the reduction efforts could be offset by these new uses. In this scenario, it would be impossible to determine whether the company has actually reduced its overall use of plastic during the year and, if a reduction has taken place, how substantial it is.

Overall, Auchan still has a long way to go to enter the race to deplastify with a clear understanding of the challenges ahead and a strategy that is fit for purpose.



CARREFOUR A SWIMMER TO WATCH

A year ago, we put Carrefour on notice because we considered its 2021 vigilance plan²⁸ unsatisfactory. Carrefour released its 2022 vigilance plan²⁹ in the first half of 2023.

Our view on the 2022 vigilance plan

The understanding of risks and the inclusion of a section specifically dedicated to plastic in the 2022 plan³⁰ are signs of progress, but satisfactory reduction targets are yet to be established.



UNDERSTANDING

Is the severity of the issue understood? The risks are not ranked according to their severity, but the risks related to plastic are presented in a clearer and more explicit manner than in the previous plan.

Are the impacts of plastic understood?

- Impacts on the environment: partially. The previous year, Auchan limited the risk to the end of life of 'non-recyclable packaging'. This year, the 'risks related to plastics' are included in the 'environment' category, but without details on the diversity of environmental impacts of plastic.
- Impacts on human rights: no, still omitted.
- Health impacts: still omitted.

Does the analysis explicitly consider the entire life cycle of plastic? Yes, the analysis now includes elements on the production, use, and end of life of plastic.



MEASUREMENT

No assessment of plastic use.



PLAN AND IMPLEMENTATION

Carrefour has provided a specific action plan for plastic pollution, which is more detailed than in last year's plan. Some measures related to deplastification are mentioned (including the reduction and reuse of certain plastic packaging), but the listed actions still fail to provide a clear and measurable trajectory for deplastification.



MONITORING

No monitoring of plastic reduction. The few performance indicators provided don't allow for the management of the overall reduction in plastic usage by the group.

28. Carrefour Group, *Universal Registration Document 2021*, vigilance plan page 126.

29. Carrefour Group, *Universal Registration Document 2022*, vigilance plan page 141.

30. Ibid.

OUR PROGROSIS

It would appear from the vigilance plan that Carrefour is gaining a better understanding of the issues and the need to deplastify. Although we are seeing the emergence of interesting initiatives for plastic reduction, unfortunately they are still a long way from a clear deplastification strategy.

Carrefour's plastic footprint³¹ is still significantly underestimated:

- The amounts disclosed only cover France, overlooking all the other countries where Carrefour operates, such as Spain, Belgium, Brazil or Argentina.
- Only packaging is included, which excludes items containing plastic in toys, clothing, kitchen utensils, office supplies, etc. The 'hidden' plastics within the value chain are also absent.
- Only Carrefour branded packaging is accounted for, which means that plastics associated with branded goods, such as Coca-Cola, L'Oréal, Cristalline, etc., that are sold by Carrefour, are excluded.

Overall, the Group appears to still fail to grasp the magnitude of the deplastification challenge.

On the other hand, Carrefour has set a target to achieve a cumulative reduction of 20,000 tonnes of packaging (including 15,000 tonnes of plastic) by 2025, from a 2017 baseline.³² At first glance, you might think that this goal envisages significant reduction, but behind the positive wording, the picture is somewhat murky:

- The goal relates to packaging alone.
- The indicator seems to represent the avoided weight of plastics that were not produced. But if, at the same time, the company grows or introduces new products that heavily rely on plastic, then the reduction efforts could be offset by these new uses. In this scenario, it would be impossible to determine whether the company has actually reduced its overall use of plastic during the year and, if a reduction has taken place, how substantial it is.
- Formulating the goal as cumulative adds to the confusion, since it could give the impression to the uninformed reader that the reduction commitment is more impressive on an annual basis than it actually is.

In 2018, Carrefour announced to its customers that it was embarking on a 'zero plastic challenge'. Even though the intention remains commendable, the group is still a long way away from meeting the challenge.

31. [Ellen Macarthur Foundation, Global commitment, reporting 2021](#). This is the group's most recently published figure. Carrefour reports a consumption of around 38,000 tonnes of plastic. But the company has a clarification in a footnote « The data that will be reported in this questionnaire only concerns the French market, which represents 20% of the total sales of the Group. Unfortunately, we do not yet report on that level of detail in the other countries. The 2021 packaging reporting covers approximately 45% of Carrefour brand sales in France". So the reported data is very partial.

32. Carrefour, Universal Registration Document 2022, page 63.

DANONE DANONE AN OFF-TRACK SWIMMER

A year ago, we put Danone on notice because we considered its 2021 vigilance plan³³ - which was totally silent on the subject of plastic - unsatisfactory. Subsequently, we took the group to court for these failures.³⁴ Danone published its 2022 vigilance plan³⁵ in the first half of 2023.

Our view on the 2022 vigilance plan

Despite our legal action, Danone's 2022 vigilance plan³⁶ remains largely similar to that of 2021. No substantial progress has been identified. Plastic is still largely absent from the plan, despite the group's significant contribution to plastic pollution³⁷.



1 UNDERSTANDING

Is the severity of the issue understood? Although Danone lists 'circular economy' and 'development of packaging circularity' among risks, these terms fail to adequately convey the seriousness of the plastic crisis.

Are the impacts of plastic understood?

- Impacts on the environment: the risks 'circular economy' and 'development of packaging circularity' are included in the environmental category. However, without details on the diverse environmental impacts of plastic, this fails to communicate the nature of the risk and its severity.
- Impacts on human rights: no, still omitted.
- Health impacts: still omitted.

Does the analysis explicitly consider the entire life cycle of plastic? No

2 MEASUREMENT

No assessment of plastic use.

3 PLAN AND IMPLEMENTATION

The vigilance plan does not describe any measures taken to address the risks related to plastics. There is no deplastification trajectory.

4 MONITORING

No monitoring of plastic reduction.

33. Danone, *Universal Registration Document 2021*, vigilance plan page 197, ,

34. <https://get.surfrider.eu/deplastifierdanone>

35. Danone, *Universal Registration Document 2022*, vigilance plan page 208.

36. Ibid

37. Break Free From Plastic, « *Branded, five years of holding corporate plastic polluters accountable* », 2022 Danone has been identified as one of the top ten global contributors to plastic pollution for the past five years by the Break Free From Plastic movement.

OUR PROGROSIS

Using over 760,000 tonnes of plastic for packaging in 2022, Danone is one of the world's largest consumers of plastic in the food industry.³⁸ This figure is huge, but it still excludes all other plastics used by the company outside of packaging. This plastic addiction has serious consequences: Danone is among the top ten global plastic polluters identified by the Break Free From Plastic movement.³⁹

Despite our warnings and in the face of the severity of the plastics crisis, Danone announced in its annual report an increase in its use of plastic packaging⁴⁰ for the second consecutive year. Furthermore, at the beginning of 2023, the group quietly postponed and modified some of its recycling targets⁴¹ seemingly also abandoning certain goals related to recycled content⁴². (Though in any case, we consider these objectives profoundly inadequate, as they do not aim for reduction of plastics at source.)

Based on our analysis, it appears that Danone has not grasped the magnitude of the plastic crisis to which it is actively contributing, nor the urgency of deplastification. Overall, we consider its performance in the race to deplastify is highly compromised.

38. Ellen MacArthur Foundation, *The Global Commitment 2022 progress report*, page 13, Danone accounts for the fourth largest plastic usage after The Coca-Cola Company, PepsiCo, and Nestlé.

39. Break Free From Plastic, « *Branded, five years of holding corporate plastic polluters accountable* », 2022 Danone has been identified as one of the top ten global contributors to plastic pollution for the past 5 years by the Break Free From Plastic movement.

40. Danone, Universal Registration Document 2022, page 164: 'Over the year, the Group used 762,519 tonnes of plastic (compared to 750,994 tonnes in 2021) due to an increase in sales volumes for the Waters Category'.

41. Danone, Universal Registration Document 2022, page 165: 'The Group has therefore set new objectives: · Designing packaging with circularity in mind, aiming for 100% reusable, recyclable, or compostable packaging by 2030; · Reducing the use of virgin fossil-origin packaging by half by 2040, with a 30% reduction by 2030, through accelerated reuse and recycled materials. The previous year, the company aimed to achieve the first goal by 2025, not 2030. The second objective was formulated on the Ellen MacArthur Foundation's website as follows: '33% virgin reduction compared to 2019' by 2025. The semantic shift from 'virgin' to 'virgin fossil-based' raises concerns about the potentially worrisome use of bioplastics alongside recycled plastic to replace virgin fossil-based plastic.

42. In Danone's 2021 Universal Registration Document, the company committed to using 50% recycled materials in all its packaging, 'including plastic packaging', by 2025. The progress towards this objective seems to be limited. In its 2021 Universal Registration Document, Danone states that it uses 11.9% recycled content in its packaging, which is an increase of only 1.5% compared to the previous year. Furthermore, Danone makes no reference to this objective in its 2022 URD, which suggests that the goal may have been abandoned. De plus, Danone ne fait aucune référence à cet objectif dans son URD 2022, ce qui indique que l'objectif a peut-être été abandonné.

Casino

GROUPE CASINO

A CASUAL SWIMMER

A year ago, we put the Casino Group on notice because we considered its 2021 vigilance plan⁴³ unsatisfactory. Casino released its 2022 vigilance plan⁴⁴ in the first half of 2023.

Our view on the 2022 vigilance plan

Despite referencing our legal notice in its 2022 vigilance plan, Casino does not appear to have fully understood the message.

The new plan has not significantly changed its approach to plastic-related risks, and our requests have hardly been addressed.



1 UNDERSTANDING

Is the severity of the issue understood? Casino's risk analysis has not significantly changed since the previous year. Casino still identifies 'Sustainable management of resources and waste' as a risk, but this wording does not accurately reflect the seriousness of the plastic crisis.

Are the impacts of plastic understood?

- Impacts on the environment: the risk of 'sustainable management of resources and waste' is included in the environmental category, but without details regarding the diversity of environmental impacts of plastic.
- Impacts on human rights: no, still omitted.
- Health impacts: still omitted.

Does the analysis explicitly consider the entire life cycle of plastic? No.

2 MEASUREMENT

No assessment of plastic use.

3 PLAN AND IMPLEMENTATION

The vigilance plan does not describe any measures taken to address the risks related to plastics. There is no deplastification trajectory.

4 MONITORING

No monitoring of plastic reduction.

43. *Groupe Casino, Universal Registration Document 2021, vigilance plan page 234,*
 44. *Groupe Casino, Universal Registration Document 2022, vigilance plan page 267,*
 45. *Ibid*

OUR PROGROSIS

In its 2022 Universal Registration Document, Casino states, 'Groupe Casino, aware of the impact of plastic on ecosystems and the environment, has for several years implemented an action plan for reduction and risk prevention, aiming to reduce the use of this material' (office translation).⁴⁶ The company also announces its commitment to 'minimizing waste by deplastifying shopping' (office translation).⁴⁶ These intentions, highlighted by a few examples of eliminated or reduced packaging, demonstrate a growing shift towards reducing use of plastic at source. Nevertheless, these efforts are far from sufficient to demonstrate a deplastification strategy that adequately addresses the current plastic crisis.

Casino appears to have a very limited understanding of its current use of plastic. 'The Casino Group estimates its plastic footprint related to its own brands to be around 35,000 tonnes for the year 2021, based on extrapolated data' (office translation).⁴⁷ This figure lacks crucial details on methodology: does it refer only to packaging or does it include all plastics used (especially non-food plastic products)? Does it also account for the 'hidden' plastics in the group's upstream and logistics? Does it cover all the markets where the group operates? There is reason to suspect that it does not even include all of the plastic packaging used by the group, as the reported packaging tonnage seems to be significantly underestimated compared to that of some of its peers. While Casino reported using around one tonne of plastic per million dollars of revenue in 2021, Walmart and Ahold Delhaize reported double that amount.⁴⁸ Furthermore, it is regrettable that only Casino's own-branded packaging is being accounted for, which means that plastics associated with branded goods – such as Coca-Cola, L'Oréal, Cristalline, etc. – sold by Casino are explicitly omitted.

Close examination of the commitments outlined in the Group's 2022 Universal Registration Document, makes clear that Casino does not have in place specific quantified objectives for reducing plastic. The objective of 'developing reuse, refill, and bulk sales business models by 2025' (office translation)⁴⁹ remains too vague and limited to guarantee the degree of deplastification required, as it could be fulfilled with just a few isolated pilot schemes. The only goals with real dates and numbers, which are more likely to attract Casino's attention and investments, are related to recycling.

Casino also does not yet seem to fully grasp that it is not just about getting customers to 'deplastify shopping' but rather for Casino to fully engage in a race to deplastify all aspects of the company's operations, whether they are visible in the store or not.

46. Groupe Casino, 2022 Universal Registration Document, Extra-Financial Performance Statement, pages 308-309.

47. Groupe Casino, 2022 Universal Registration Document, Extra-Financial Performance Statement, page 310.

48. With the EUR-USD exchange rate at EUR 1 = USD 1.1325 as of 31st December 2021.

- Casino reported a 2021 revenue of EUR 30.5 billion, which is equivalent to USD 34.5 billion, and a plastic consumption of 35,000 tonnes in 2021, resulting in 1 tonne of plastic per million USD of revenue.

- Walmart reported a 2021 revenue of USD 555 billion and a plastic consumption of 1,115,249 tonnes in 2021 according to the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, which equates to 2 tonnes of plastic per million USD of revenue.

- Ahold Delhaize reported a 2021 revenue of EUR 75,601 billion, which is USD 85,618 billion, and a plastic consumption of 159,189 tonnes in 2021 according to the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, which is equivalent to 1.8 tonnes of plastic per million USD of revenue.

49. [Groupe Casino, 2022 Universal Registration Document, Extra-Financial Performance Statement, page 308.](#)



LACTALIS A CASUAL SWIMMER

A year ago, we put Lactalis on notice because it had not published a 2021 vigilance plan. Lactalis published its 2022 vigilance plan⁵⁰ during the summer of 2023.



Our view on the 2022 vigilance plan

Following our legal notice, Lactalis published a 2021⁵¹ vigilance plan that did not adequately address our demands. The 2022 plan⁵², released a few months later, is very similar to the previous one and we consider it to be unsatisfactory. The focus on plastic primarily revolves around packaging. The risks associated with 'packaging' are presented in an incomplete and ambiguous manner. Having not demonstrated that it has understood the nature of risks associated with plastic, Lactalis is not in a good position to implement the necessary deplastification strategy.



UNDERSTANDING

Is the severity of the issue understood? Lactalis addresses plastic-related risks twice in its vigilance plan, each time using a different approach.⁵³ The analysis remains unclear, making it difficult to determine the severity level and nature of the identified risk. Has Lactalis truly understood the impacts of its plastic usage?

Are the impacts of plastic understood?

- Environmental impacts: The various 'packaging' risks identified by Lactalis are included in the environmental category, but without details on the wide range of environmental impacts of plastic.
- Impacts on human rights : No, these are omitted.
- Impacts on health : No, these are omitted.

Does the analysis explicitly consider the entire life cycle of plastic? No.



MEASUREMENT

No assessment of plastic use.



PLAN AND IMPLEMENTATION

No deplastification trajectory. The actions mentioned in the vigilance plan remain vague, and strategic objectives provided mainly focus on recycling and the incorporation of recycled content.



MONITORING

No monitoring of plastic reduction. The plan refers to tracking KPIs related to 'packaging', but fails to provide details that could substantiate its management of plastic reduction efforts.

50. [Lactalis, 2022 Sustainability Report, vigilance plan](#) page 64,

51. [Lactalis, 2021 Vigilance Plan](#),

52. [Lactalis, 2022 Sustainability Report, vigilance plan](#) page 64,

53. Lactalis, 2022 Vigilance Plan:

1) Page 66, in the table titled 'Priority Issue', the risk is referred to as 'Responsible Packaging and Circular Economy'. Despite being classified as a priority, the issue is still downplayed by Lactalis, which presents packaging as fundamental for food safety.

2) On page 68, the supply chain risk mapping includes risks related to 'non-recyclable' and 'non-renewable' packaging, classified as environmental risks. These terms, which are problematic, reduce the risk to an end-of-life issue. In essence, there's a sense of ambiguity, with no known designation or priority level for this risk.

OUR PROGROSIS

'In our view, plastic materials remain essential to ensure the highest quality and most efficient food safety' (office translation)⁵⁴. This questionable statement⁵⁵ speaks volumes. Lactalis appears to be expressing its long-term commitment to single-use packaging.

Lactalis uses a substantial amount of plastic. In its packaging policy, Lactalis discloses that it places 650,000 tonnes of packaging on the market each year, with 33% of them being plastics, which amounts to an estimated 214,500 tonnes of plastic packaging (data from 2019).⁵⁶ This figure, which is provided without any details on methodology, includes only plastic packaging put on the market, excluding those arising from logistics, industrial, corporate, agricultural, promotional plastics, etc., from the calculation. The amount disclosed is therefore significantly underestimated. Furthermore, this figure, which dates back to 2019, does not take the recent developments within the group into account. Since 2019, the group has acquired several food companies, which themselves (presumably) consume plastic and do not appear to be covered in the calculation.⁵⁷ An annual update would be most welcome.

For these reasons, the packaging policy implemented by the group is flawed and fails to properly grapple with the issue :

- It is built on vague wording – talking about opting for 'the right packaging' using 'the right materials' (office translation) – that lack clear meaning and fall short of the challenge presented by Lactalis's intense use of single-use plastics and the negative impacts of this.
- The group steers clear of concrete quantified targets and leans towards vague statements like 'striving to eliminate PVC from our packaging by 2025' or 'increasing the amount of recycled materials incorporated into our packaging' (office translations).⁵⁸
- Lactalis misuses the concept of the circular economy⁵⁹, seemingly using this term merely to signify 'recycling,' at the expense of more prioritized circular economy strategies that aim to prevent waste from arising in the first place. In principle, the concept of the circular economy mainly prioritizes the reduction of plastic and views recycling as a last resort. However, Lactalis directs almost all its efforts towards 'improved circularity' through recycling, which it considers as a way to 'close the loop' (office translations).⁶⁰

It is regrettable to observe that in its packaging policy Lactalis chooses to justify the debatable need for plastic to ensure food safety rather than committing Lactalis to actively pursue the path towards deplastification. On reading these documents, it appears that the group has not fully grasped the extent of the impacts of plastic on the environment, human health, and human rights.

It's time to put on the swimsuit, leave the locker room, and finally engage with purpose in the race.

54. [Lactalis packaging policy, February 2022, page 5.](#)

55. The argument that single-use packaging is the only way to ensure the safety and hygiene of perishable goods is often put forward by the food industry. As highlighted by an information sheet produced by Zero Waste Europe, this is a myth: reusable packaging systems can ensure hygiene, noting '... it is crucial to emphasise that there is a long and remarkable history of reusable packaging used for generations worldwide to transport dairy products, meats, seafood, fruits, vegetables, grains, and other foods'. [Information sheet from Zero Waste Europe, Debunking common myths about food hygiene, food waste, and health concerns related to reusable packaging, 2023.](#)

56. [Lactalis packaging policy, February 2022, page 4.](#)

57. In 2019, Lactalis completed nine acquisitions, including the brand Itambé in Brazil, becoming the leader in dairy products in Brazil : https://www.lactalis.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/11072019_Communique-de-presse-Lactalis-acquisition-dlItambe.pdf.

58. [Lactalis packaging policy, February 2022, page 8.](#)

59. For a comprehensive definition, refer to footnote number 1.

60. 'A more circular packaging economy requires careful consideration during the selection and sourcing of materials. It is our responsibility to establish new avenues for incorporating recycled materials while ensuring the proper recyclability of our packaging wherever it is sold. In our view, plastic materials remain essential to ensure the highest quality and most effective food safety. Closing the loop is thus even more fundamental.' [Lactalis packaging policy, February 2022, page 8](#)



LES MOUSQUETAIRES A HESITANT SWIMMER

A year ago, we put Les Mousquetaires on notice because we considered its 2021 vigilance plan⁶¹ unsatisfactory.

Les Mousquetaires published its 2022 vigilance plan⁶² during the summer of 2023.

Our view on the 2022 vigilance plan

Following our legal notice, Les Mousquetaires released a new version of its 2021 plan to include a section dedicated to plastic. The 2022 plan⁶³, which is quite similar to the updated 2021 plan, does show some progress compared to the initial 2021 plan, but still falls short of being satisfactory. The risks associated with plastic are better identified, the need to reduce plastic is better acknowledged, but the action plans intended to address these issues do not reflect the urgency of plastic reduction.



UNDERSTANDING

Is the severity of the issue understood ? The risk of 'plastic reduction and elimination' is now considered significant. The risks associated with plastic are better described.

Are the impacts of plastic understood?

Environmental impacts: Yes, the plan now specifies the impact of plastic on water, air, soil, and biodiversity this year.

Impacts on human rights: Partially. The plan mentions the specific risks faced by individuals exposed to plastic over extended periods and vulnerable populations.

Impacts on health: Yes, the health risks related to industrial accidents, plastic ingestion, and inhalation are described.

Does the analysis explicitly consider the entire life cycle of plastic? Yes, the analysis now includes elements on the production, use and end of life of plastic.



MEASUREMENT

No assessment of plastic use.

There is a table identifying the sources of plastics used by the company in its operations. However, this table does not quantify these uses of plastics. Furthermore, by focusing on plastic packaging and products, it overlooks a number of 'hidden' plastics within the value chain: agricultural plastics, industrial plastics, corporate plastics, promotional plastics, etc.



PLAN AND IMPLEMENTATION

No deplastification trajectory.

Some measures related to plastic reduction – such as the development of bulk and reuse models – are mentioned but these actions fall short of a clear and measurable deplastification trajectory.



MONITORING

No monitoring of plastic reduction. Occasionally, the amount of plastic 'saved' (avoided) is provided alongside certain described measures. But without context on the total amount of plastic used by the group, this information cannot be used to monitor progress.

61. [The previous 2021 plan of Les Mousquetaires](#) The previous 2021 plan of Les Mousquetaires is still available on the Radar for Duty of Vigilance.

62. [Les Mousquetaires, 2022 Vigilance](#), 2022, publié en 2023.

63. *Ibid.*

OUR PROGROSIS

For an aggressive circular economy' - that's how Les Mousquetaires introduces the topic in their 2022 sustainability report (office translation).⁶⁴ On reading this intriguing title, our attention is piqued, will we finally see a circular economy strategy that prioritises plastic reduction? The report also quickly goes on to explain the impacts of plastic on the environment and health, as well as the need to reduce its usage. Has our message finally got through?

After carefully reading of the rest of the report, our enthusiasm quickly waned. There are indeed a few plastic reduction measures scattered here and there such as the phasing-out of polystyrene in the seafood section and the introduction of bulk sections in certain stores. We also noticed the emphasis on substituting plastic with cardboard for fruits and vegetables, which is in fact a legal requirement. But the crucial aspect is missing; disclosure of the total tonnage of plastics used by the group and clear and measurable objectives for reducing plastic

usage. This absence makes it difficult to gauge the seriousness and effectiveness of measures implemented. Instead, the report provides a plethora of information about incorporating recycled plastic, promoting recycling and waste sorting, and improving packaging recyclability. However, these efforts seem resource intensive and energy consuming with limited effects on the overall impacts of plastic used.

Catchy phrases and grand declarations are not enough. Now that Les Mousquetaires acknowledges the impacts of its plastic usage and the need to reduce plastic,

It's time for the group to move from words to actions and plan its plastic reduction in earnest.

64. Les Mousquetaires, [Sustainable Development Report 2022](#), page 49

MCDONALD'S FRANCE ABSENT SWIMMER



A year ago, we put McDonald's France on notice because it had not published a 2021 vigilance plan. In response to our legal notice, McDonald's France stated that it was not subject to the duty of vigilance law on the basis of its legal form of incorporation⁶⁵ – a position that is contested⁶⁶. In any case, given the size, influence and impact of the company, we consider that it would be appropriate for McDonald's France to publish a vigilance plan.

Our view on the vigilance plan

Despite our legal notice, McDonald's France still has not published a vigilance plan this year.



1 UNDERSTANDING



2 MEASUREMENT



3 PLAN AND IMPLEMENTATION



4 MONITORING

65. A "Société par Actions Simplifiée" or SAS under French law (simplified joint stock company).

66. «As soon as the law was adopted, the Government's intention regarding its application to SASs was clear: the comments it made as part of the review of the constitutionality of the law (3) state that the law applies «to simplified joint stock companies, in accordance with the references provided for by [Article] L. 227-1 of the Commercial Code». The Directorate General of the Treasury thus told your rapporteurs that, in practice, the SASs with which it has exchanged regarding the duty of vigilance do indeed consider themselves subject to the Act of 27 March 2017. These comments are confirmed by an analysis of the vigilance plans published; Renault SAS, ArcelorMittal and Decathlon France, to name just 3 SASs, have indeed published a vigilance plan, which shows that these companies do in fact consider themselves to be subject to the law» (office translation). Information report submitted pursuant to Article 145-7 paragraph 1 of the Rules of Procedure, by the Committee on Constitutional Laws, Legislation and the General Administration of the Republic on the assessment of the Act of 27 March 2017 on the duty of care of parent companies and ordering companies (Ms Coralie Dubost and Mr Dominique Potier), February 2022, page 45.

OUR PROGROSIS

Over the past few years and in response to increasing pressure to address the enormous quantities of waste generated in its restaurants,⁶⁷ McDonald's France had to adjust its packaging practices. Whilst in the eyes of its customers, McDonald's self-proclaimed strategy of 'zero single-use plastic'⁶⁸ may appear to be a step in the right direction, the actions taken do not live up to the promise of this objective.

While McDonald's France might be ready to move away from single-use plastics, it remains attached to the disposable model. McDonald's France has gradually replaced a significant portion of its plastic packaging with paper and cardboard packaging⁶⁹. This shift from plastic to cardboard is not without consequences, as it significantly increases pressure on wood supply chains, which in turn could contribute to illegal deforestation or the creation of biodiversity-poor monoculture forests. Furthermore, managing paper/cardboard packaging at end of life also presents challenges, as greasy, damp, and soiled packaging (from items like fries, sauces, or burgers, for example) with damaged cellulose fibers are unlikely to be recycled.⁷⁰

Regarding reusable packaging – a model that makes a lot of sense for a company that conducts a significant portion of its operations on its own premises – the situation is concerning. In France the 'AGEC' law has required restaurants with more than twenty covers to use reusable dishes and cutlery since 1 January 2023. The legal requirement was slow to be implemented across McDonald's France restaurants.⁷¹

At the European level, McDonald's has robustly lobbied against measures that would make reusable packaging mandatory for the food industry,⁷² as put forward by the European Commission in the proposed Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation.⁷³ They have even gone so far as to ask decision-makers to put a halt on the long-awaited and necessary regulation.⁷⁴ The reason, according to the co-signatories, is that recyclable disposable packaging would be much more environmentally friendly than reuse. This controversial assertion is rooted in a report⁷⁵ commissioned by McDonald's and is widely contested by many commentators, who particularly criticized the absence of the publication of data that forms the basis of the report's conclusions⁷⁶.

Despite its claims, McDonald's France appears to be off to a rocky start in the race to deplastify.

In this crucial transition, it is regrettable to see the company hinder its own progress with counterproductive actions and intensive lobbying.

67. Zero Waste Europe, [Zero Waste France dénonce le manque de tri des déchets dans les fast-foods](#), 2018,

68. McDonald's France, [press release](#), 2021,

69. McDonald's France, [Waste and the Eco-Conception of packaging](#), 2021,

70. Humidity and stains, particularly grease stains, are the two enemies of recycling cardboard and paper. In effect, humidity damages the fibres of the pulp. Worse, the grease stains risk polluting the rest of the waste in the recycling package. This means they should not be put in the recycling. PAPREC, [Tout savoir sur le recyclage du papier et du carton](#),

71. In January 2023, Zero Waste France surveyed 286 French restaurants to check how the AGEC law was being implemented. At the time of the survey, only 76% of McDonald's restaurants visited had made the switch to reusable dishes and cutlery <https://www.zerowaste-france.org/2023-place-a-la-vaisselle-reutilisable-dans-les-fast-foods/>

72. [McDonalds has even produced a site dedicated to sharing its position opposing reuse in the PPWR - 'No Silver Bullet' 'Packaging is a vital part of delivering food and drink to Europeans in a quick, safe and sustainable way.'](#)

73. Influence Map Europe EU Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation.

74. [Together for sustainable packaging](#), "Lettre ouverte, Suspendre la proposition sur PPWR", 2023,

75. Kearney, "No silver bullet", Février 2023,

76. Break Free From Plastic, "New McDonald's study attempts to water down EU ambition on reuse", Février 2023,

Nestlé

NESTLE FRANCE

LAGGING

BEHIND



A year ago, we put Nestlé France on notice because it had not published a 2021 vigilance plan. Its 2020 vigilance plan⁷⁷ – published the previous year – was available and we considered it to be unsatisfactory.

Our view on the Nestlé France’ 2021 vigilance plan

Nestlé France has not yet published its 2022 vigilance plan. The 2021 plan⁷⁸ – published following our legal notice – shows some progress compared to the 2020 plan but remains unsatisfactory.

1 UNDERSTANDING

Is the severity of the issue understood? The risk of ‘plastic pollution’ is considered ‘major’ in the 2021 plan.

Are the impacts of plastic understood?

- Impacts on the environment: The risk of ‘plastic pollution’ is included in the ‘environment’ category, but without details about the wide range of environmental impacts of plastic.
- Impacts on human rights: no, still omitted.
- Health impacts: no, still omitted.

Does the analysis explicitly consider the entire life cycle of plastic? No.

2 MEASUREMENT

Incomplete assessment of plastic use. The plan only reports that it placed 62,000 tonnes of plastic packaging in 2021. The total is therefore significantly underestimated, as it excludes all the other plastics used by Nestlé France.

3 PLAN AND IMPLEMENTATION

No deplastification trajectory.

Some measures related to deplastification, as well as plastic use reduction goals, which are unclear⁷⁹ are mentioned. The listed actions and objectives, however, still do not constitute a clear and measurable trajectory for deplastification.

4 MONITORING

The 2021 plan announces ‘-24% virgin plastic, including a 6% absolute reduction’. These measures however, are based on incomplete plastic footprint and fail to properly place Nestlé France on a deplastification trajectory.

77. Nestlé France, [2020 vigilance plan](#), publié en 2021,

78. Nestlé France, [vigilance plan for 2021](#), published in December 2022

79. Nestlé France, vigilance plan for 2021, published in December 2022. On page 51, Nestlé France commits to a ‘-1/3 virgin plastic’ reduction by 2025 (equivalent to -33%), while on page 50, it announces ‘[Nestlé France] is committed to reducing virgin plastic products and packaging by at least 20% (by weight) by 2025 compared to 2017, including a 10% absolute reduction’. The actual commitment of Nestlé France remains unclear.

OUR PROGROSIS

Nestlé is a Swiss multinational corporation and heavily reliant on plastic. It's significant contribution to plastic pollution has been extensively criticized. At a global level, the group reports using 920,000 tonnes of plastic packaging in 2021, making it one of the world's highest users of plastic packaging⁸⁰ and – as an unfortunate consequence - one of the three companies with the greatest contribution to plastic pollution worldwide according to the Break Free From Plastic movement⁸¹.

Nestlé France is the subsidiary of the group operating on the French market. Setting a goal to achieve a 10% reduction in plastic packaging by 2025 (at a national level) indicates a better understanding of the need to reduce plastic and is a first step in the right direction. However, several points should be noted:

It is unfortunate that this goal is not accompanied by any explanation on the methodology or monitoring of the reduction goal. Nestlé France relies on a simple percentage reduction without further explanations, which will not facilitate the interpretation of the results.

The objective is far too small and short-term to constitute a satisfactory and suitable plastic reduction in light of the scale of the plastic crisis.

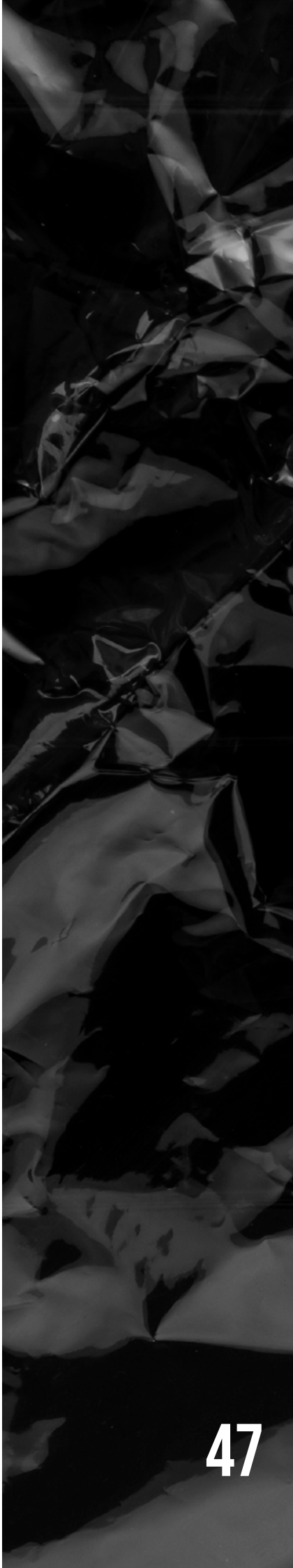
Furthermore, this objective stands alongside other actions and goals that receive much more significant attention and promotion from Nestlé France, some of which are problematic. For example, Nestlé France has set the seemingly commendable objective of reducing its use of virgin plastic in packaging by 1/3 by 2025. To achieve this goal, Nestlé France plans to substitute virgin plastic with recycled plastic, among other measures.⁸²

Nestlé France appears to recognize the need to reduce its plastic usage, but despite the urgency, the company does not seem to prioritise this reduction over other initiatives with lesser impact. As of now, Nestlé France still seems to prioritise recycling and substitution over the absolute reduction of all plastics. It's time to shift perspective.

As of now, Nestlé France still seems to prioritise recycling and substitution over the absolute reduction of all plastics. It's time to shift perspective.

80. Ellen MacArthur Foundation, [Global Commitment 2022](#). Among the 95 respondents in Global Commitment, Nestlé is the sixth company reporting the highest volume of plastic use.
81. Break Free From Plastic, [«Branded, five years of holding corporate plastic polluters accountable»](#), 2022

81. Nestlé France [«Stratégie 3R: Nestlé poursuit ses avancées en matière d'emballage plus responsable»](#), 2022.
To note – this objective lives alongside the group's objective to achieve a 30% recycled plastic packaging target by 2025.





PICARD SURGELES ABSENT SWIMMER

A year ago, we put Picard Surgelés on notice because it had not published a 2021 vigilance plan. In response to our legal notice, Picard Surgelés asserted that it was not subject to the duty of vigilance law on the basis that its number of employees fell beneath the threshold set out in the law. This position contradicts information shared by Pappers (a website that provides legal documentation on companies) which indicates that the relevant employee thresholds were passed in 2021 and 2022.⁸³ In any case, given the size, influence and impact of the company, we consider that it would be appropriate for Picard Surgelés to publish a vigilance plan.

Our view on the vigilance plan

Despite our legal notice, Picard Surgelés still has not published a vigilance plan this year.



1 UNDERSTANDING

2 MEASUREMENT

3 PLAN AND IMPLEMENTATION

4 MONITORING

OUR PRONOSTICS

In the race to deplastify, Picard Surgelés is nowhere to be found. The limited information available online on the topic is far from comprehensive. For example, the group's 2020-2021 sustainability report⁸⁴ – which has not been updated since then, dedicates only a short, high-level paragraph and two metrics on the topic:

- '1,068 tonnes of plastic avoided from 2018 to 2020'
- '70% of our packaging is recyclable', (office translations).

Unfortunately, this information certainly does not provide any evidence of ongoing plastic reduction efforts at Picard Surgelés. The group has also communicated on CITEO's website about several initiatives involving plastic reduction or substitution with other materials.⁸⁵ However, the crucial aspect is still missing: the publication of a comprehensive assessment of its use of plastic along with quantified plastic reduction goals, which are fundamental elements for establishing a credible and effective deplastification strategy.

In this context, Picard Surgelés urgently needs to accelerate work to develop a deplastification strategy.

⁸⁴. Picard, « Nos engagements pour une croissance durable : Rapport de Responsabilité Sociétale de l'entreprise 2020 – 2021 ».
⁸⁵. CITEO, « écoconception des emballages : Picard brise la glace », 2022.

LET'S DIVE IN!

The journey towards plastic reduction should have started decades ago. The companies on our start line are dragging their feet.

Still, from the stands, we can see that there is a transformation underway. The updated vigilance plans reflect a better understanding of the impacts of plastic on the environment and society throughout its lifecycle, and the reduction of plastic is also gaining prominence in corporate discourse. Even if it's still barely finding its way into companies' priorities and actions, this shift underscores a key change; companies now recognise that they must accelerate their efforts and provide proper responses to their stakeholders.

As it stands, among the companies that have been issued legal notices, some merely state the importance of reducing plastic, without necessarily seeming committed to take the necessary steps to bring about this reduction. Plastic reduction actions and the allocation of resources to implement them continue to be neglected. Recycling-related programs still consume a very significant portion of companies' energy and resources, with disappointing results so far.

To tackle this challenge, it is crucial for companies to harness all their financial, human, and partnership resources dedicated to the circular economy, aiming to reduce plastics and other single-use packaging at source. Our request to these companies today is that they align their words and actions, and finally place deplastification at the core of their strategy.

Preparing a vigilance plan should provide an opportunity for dialogue between the company and its stakeholders, including civil society, regarding the impacts of its activities across its entire value chain. Most importantly, vigilance plans should outline how these impacts are limited and mitigated. In recent years, NGOs have tirelessly raised alarms about the dire impacts of plastic use and the need for companies to deplastify. It's now up to companies to take action by incorporating the measures needed to deplastify into their vigilance plans.

This team of swimmers is entering the race to deplastify today, with promising capabilities but unconvincing performances. Despite their rookie mistakes, they have the opportunity to take control and prove that they can significantly accelerate their efforts.

So, ladies and gentlemen of these French food giants - roll up your sleeves and dive in!



RÉACTIONS

Before publishing this report, we informed the nine companies referred to in order to give them the opportunity to respond if they wished to



Reducing our environmental footprint is a priority for Lactalis' CSR approach. The issue of packaging and plastics is the subject of concrete commitments and projects. The nature of the products we sell, which are moist and fragile, does not allow us to introduce bulk packaging on a large scale, nor to redesign our products so that they do not require packaging. To date, there is no alternative that would enable us to meet our regulatory and health constraints (Regulation No. 178/2002 laying down the general principles and requirements of food law and Regulation No. 853/2004 laying down specific hygiene rules for food of animal origin). This is why we have opted for other solutions and are investing to ensure that packaging can be recycled and to promote the circular economy. We are also working to reduce volumes at source, to reduce the amount of plastic used for each product and to find alternatives wherever possible.



I have read your document.

First of all, we strongly object to the term «casual swimmer».

As we told you during our meeting on 22 March 2023 at our offices, the Casino Group is fully committed to reducing the amount of plastic used in its activities, and has been for several years. On the contrary, it is clear, structured and committed.

Concerning our actions and our policy, as already indicated,

· The Group has been a member of the National Pact on Plastic Packaging since 2019.

· Our plan is to eliminate and reduce plastic where possible, in compliance with regulations and mandatory health standards, when renewing packaging.

· Solutions are gradually being rolled out, with a real impact, such as Casino's residue-free pasta packets, which come in cardboard boxes rather than plastic packaging.

· Reduction actions are carried out in conjunction with our hundreds of SME suppliers for our own brands.

· Our plastic footprint for France is estimated at 35,000 tonnes. This figure is consistent with those of our competitors mentioned in your document, contrary to what you indicate, since France represents around 50% of the Group's sales.

· We are participating in the development of retail sector roadmaps on point of sale packaging and industrial and commercial packaging, in order to define possible joint solutions for deplastifying these activities, taking into account the operational issues of product safety.

· As regards private brands, we are discussing with them their strategies for reducing plastic packaging. Since private-brand products are sold in the same format in every chain store in France, and the Group has a market share of around 6%, it is essential that all the players involved (particularly the two leading retailers, who together account for more than 40% of the market) take action. This is why we are working within the Plastic Pact and the working groups that bring together the entire industry.

As you know, our 2022 action plan, on which you rely, was already finalised at the time of our discussions on 22 March 2023, since it was included in our universal registration document published at the end of March 2023.

· As part of the process of updating our risk mapping, it is important for us to receive all the information you mentioned at our meeting about suppliers who sell their products in our shops and who are allegedly linked to human rights and environmental violations, reports which we have not received, unless I am mistaken.

· To this end, you can use our alert system, which guarantees the protection of information, to provide it to contact75vgl@deontologue.com.

I would like to continue our dialogue and suggest that we meet again in November to discuss risk mapping and action monitoring.

I remain at your disposal and would be delighted to hear from you,

Yours sincerely

[...]

