



FEFPEB PRESS RELEASE

May 26th, 2020

FEFPEB calls for ongoing essential European status for wooden pallets and packaging after Covid-19

The European Federation of Wooden Pallet & Packaging Manufacturers (FEFPEB) has called for European governments to recognise the wooden pallet and packaging industry as essential to supply chains of vital goods both during and after the Covid-19 pandemic.

The organisation, which represents the sector across Europe, has lobbied for 'essential' status for wooden pallets and packaging throughout the crisis. This was officially given by authorities in countries including Belgium, Italy, the UK and in some German regions; and in other countries the industry has been allowed to work – all with additional health and safety measure in place - in order to keep products such as food and medicines flowing into the market.

FEFPEB is now asking for officially recognised 'essential status' across Europe and on an ongoing basis, to give governments understanding of the sector's vital role in supply chains and clarity about the necessity to keep supplies of pallets and packaging moving at all times – during a crisis and in general.

FEFPEB secretary general Fons Ceelaert said: 'Wooden pallets and packaging play a key part in keeping supply chains for vital goods including foods and medicines moving – this has been proved during the different coronavirus lockdown measures across Europe. If manufacturers and repairers cannot operate, these supply chains will break down.

'We are therefore calling for the EC and governments of all European countries to designate this industry as essential. This will ensure continuity of supply during any subsequent pandemics or other crises, but also help guarantee they will continue to function on a day-to-day basis and throughout critical periods such the Brexit transition phase.'

FEFPEB is continuing to communicate the central part wooden pallets and packaging have to play in the EU's Circular Economy Action Plan, which aims to make sustainable products the norm in the EU, ensure less waste and lead global efforts on the circular economy.

'Wooden pallets and packaging are the epitome of sustainable products,' said Ceelaert. 'They are made from a continually renewable resource and are repaired and reused until they are recycled into products or fuel at the end of their useful life. As a key facilitator for the movement of goods, they sit at the heart of the vision of a circular economy.'

Note: see attached graphic on the circular lifespan of a pallet.

Wooden pallets: 13 times higher antibacterial activity than plastic

Meanwhile, FEFPEB has highlighted details of the latest research to show that wooden pallets are the best choice for the transportation of food products.

The study, carried out by [Institut für Holztechnologie in Dresden on behalf of EPAL Germany](#) between February 2018 and December 2019, compared the microbial properties of standard EPAL Euro pallets and H1 plastic pallets. It found that bacteria had a lower survival rate on the wooden surface compared with plastic and that wooden pallets are suitable for use in hygiene-sensitive areas, including food processing and transport.

The results also showed clearly that the rough sections caused by wear on the surface of plastic pallets provide ideal conditions for the growth of bacteria. Wood, meanwhile, has natural antibacterial properties that prevent microorganisms from spreading.

According to the study, wooden pallets have an antibacterial activity that is more than thirteen times higher than that of the H1 plastics.

The pallets were tested according to certified methods, had all been used at least once and were not cleaned before testing.

The findings of the study build on previous research, including the 2016 report by Aviat et al, which reviewed 86 publications to ascertain whether contact between wood and food is safe. This concluded that wood is suitable because its often-rough surface and porous structure often creates conditions that are unfavourable to microorganisms.

‘These results are the latest confirmation that wooden pallets and packaging are the right choice for food and other hygiene-sensitive supply chains – in addition to them being the most sustainable and economic option,’ said Ceelaert. ‘Despite the fact that wood has long been used safely alongside food in hygiene-sensitive environments and has been supported by the outcomes of previous research, our credentials have been challenged by certain other industries. The study provides further clear evidence that wood is not just a suitable choice for these uses, it is the first choice.’

For more information, please contact: info@fefpeb.eu

Notes:

- The EC guidelines - COVID-19: Commission presents guidelines for border measures to protect health and keep goods and essential services available – are available at https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_468
- For more information about the EPAL Germany study: https://www.epal-pallets.org/fileadmin/user_upload/ntg_package/images/Hygienestudy/EPAL_Germany_Hygiene_Study_GB.pdf
- The European Federation of Wooden Pallet & Packaging Manufacturers (Fédération Européenne des Fabricants de Palettes and Emballages en Bois – FEFPEB) represents European national timber packaging associations, including the pallet, lightweight packaging and industrial packaging sectors. It was established in 1946.
- It is a not for profit organisation, whose objectives include promotion of timber packaging and representing the interests of the European wooden pallet and packaging industry.
- National professional associations of wooden pallet and packaging manufacturers are full members of FEFPEB.
- Other companies involved in the industry, including suppliers of timber and timber blocks, machines and equipment are associated or individual members.
- The major European pallet pools (including EPAL, CHEP, LPR, IPP Logipal and PRS) are also part of FEFPEB.