

Returpack – Sweden



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Returpack is responsible for running the return system with deposit for ready-to-drink beverages in Sweden. It is a privately owned company, owned by the associations for the Swedish Breweries and the Grocery Trade. The company was formed in 1984 with the introduction of the first deposit law in Sweden.

The first deposit law in Sweden was passed in 1982 and was covering the introduction of aluminium cans into the Swedish market place. Government officials and policy makers were worried about the impact one way packaging would have on littering in Sweden and wanted to ban the use of one way packaging. The deposit law was the resulting compromise between industry and the government officials, and was a development of the already existing deposit system for glass bottles and crates that had been run in Sweden by the breweries since 1885.

In 1994 the system expanded to also cover one way bottles of PET.

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The current deposit law dates back to 2005 and stipulates that:

”Anyone who as a business, bottles **ready to drink** beverages in **plastic bottles or metal cans** or as a business, imports **ready to drink** beverages to Sweden in **plastic bottles or metal cans**, shall ensure that the bottle or can belongs to an **authorized return system.**”

The law also stipulates that a deposit should be charged and given back when the package is returned.

Authorization is given by the National Board of Agriculture which is also the supervisory body. Returpack is authorized to run such a return system in Sweden, and is for the moment the only organization that is authorized to do so.

There is in the current law, but currently under review, an exemption, that products containing more than 50% fruit or berry juice or milk content, do not need to belong to such a return system.

The responsibilities of the system is connected to the selling of the products, not the collection. This means that there are no obligations for anyone selling these products to take back the empty containers and give the deposit back. That is why the deposit system in Sweden is built around the grocery trade, whereas the service trade and other establishments only take containers back to a varying degree.

Returpack Sweden

Returpack is currently an operation of about 70 employees, located in Norrköping, Sweden, that manages all the aspects of the deposit system including:

- The flow of deposits and fees to finance the system but also handling fees to compensate customers for their costs.
- Registration and testing of all packages to be part of the system to ensure they fulfil our requirements
- Agreements with stores and others that will collect the empty containers from the consumers
- Plan and manage all the logistics carried out by 3rd party companies
- Process all the incoming material, sorting and baling
- The sale of aluminium and plastics to recyclers with purpose of making new bottles and cans
- Report statistics and recycling data to government authorities
- Develop the system and find new ways to improve the recycling rates
- Inform about the system, manage media, campaigns, communication to the public and others through our brand name Pantamera

The Returpack system today covers metal cans and plastic bottles, for ready-to-drink beverages (mandatory by law) and dilutable syrups and juices (voluntary)

Returpack Highlights

- 1 site
- 70 employees
- 5 073 articles
- 12 585 customers
- 4 000 000 km/year
- 2,05 billion cans and bottles
- 3,1 billion SEK in turnover

Recycling Rates

- 18 400 tons of aluminium
- 22 400 tons of PET
- 1 400 tons of HDPE (closures)
- 84,5% recycling rate (Returpack only)
- ~10% lost in border trade (Sw/No)
- ~3% lost to other metal/plastic collection

Returpack Key Factors for the “Success”

- Uniform products (content, material and shape)
- Products designed for recycling
- 100% material recycling, no waste
- Encouraging communication to consumers - brand
- Collection and recognition through machines
- A reasonable deposit (1kr, 2kr)

