



BELGIUM'S DEMO FOREST DELIVERS SUSTAINABLE SUCCESS

Demo Forest is an event in Bertrix, Belgium which brings together the eco-conscious community to exchange ideas for sustainable agricultural, forestry and environmental practices. The interactive programme, organised by the Libramont Agricultural and Forestry Fair, hosts a series of demonstrations, talks, workshops, championships and competitions in the heart of a region which produces a million hectares of forest. It is the event for the wood industry.

GOING GREEN

In 2019, more than 200 exhibitors and 50,000 attendees were on the 120-hectare site over two days. To further reduce their environmental impact the event organisers chose Vegware compostable foodservice packaging across the site, which was turned into quality compost after use.



AN ECO FIRST

This was a first for an event of this magnitude in Belgium and required cooperation from all key teams involved: packaging company MJ Pack who supplied the compostable Vegware packaging, on-site caterers and refreshment stands, collection and sorting team SAUPUB, recycling machine and bin supplier CETT Rochefort, and waste facility IDELUX Environment, who support the economic dynamism and waste management of Belgian Luxembourg.

The initiative came from the MD of MJ Pack, Johnny Macoir, who approached Demo Forest's patron Alexandre Devolf in May 2018. Macoir explains,

“I realised that by using compostable packaging, the catering stands would reduce general waste by 300kg. Devolf shared my vision to bring further sustainability practices to the event and was up for the challenge.”

Devolf adds,

“As a leading environmental event, Demo Forest always wants to evolve our eco-friendly strategies and adopt new practices to set the gold standard in the industry. We were delighted to replace our conventional catering disposables with compostables, helping us, our exhibitors and on-site caterers, and the event attendees, all participate in our local circular economy.”



PLANT-BASED PACKAGING

The catering team liked Vegware for its sturdiness, practicality and food presentation. The event organisers appreciated working with the most trusted brand for compostables, with a wide product range to accommodate the catering team's needs.

MJ Pack conducted a product match, replacing polystyrene chip trays with Vegware bagasse takeaway containers and single-use plastic cutlery with its plant-based CPLA and wooden options. Alongside Vegware hot and cold cups, soup containers and PLA bags, reusable drinking vessels were also used.





CONTAMINATION CHECK

The event's bin signage provided visual cues on what to place in the food waste and compostables bins. These were monitored by a student from AIVE waste facility, as behaviour change takes time when introducing a new recycling systems to a large-scale site. In order to obtain an optimal sorting quality (100% organic and compostable waste), a mobile sorting machine, provided by the company CETT Rochefort, was on site to manually sort and verify the compostable waste for contamination.

An AIVE's on-site student representation, said:

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We worked closely with SAUPUB to minimise contamination. As well as checking bins, I was on-hand to answer visitor queries. At the end of the day, SAUPUB hand sorted the compostable, dry recycling and general waste. Through rigorous sorting and verification, we could be confident we were sending good quality organic matter to the composting facility.

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QUALITY COMPOST

The result? 420kg of organic matter – comprised of 20,000 used Vegware catering disposables, leftover food and other biodegradable material – was recovered and transported by CETT Rochefort to AIVE, Tenneville. Here, through a process of anaerobic digestion and composting, Demo Forest's biowaste was transformed into green energy, to produce renewable electricity and renewable heat, as well as quality compost, both for local use.

THE FUTURE IS FOREST GREEN

For all involved, this is just the first sustainable step, and the team is determined to build on these results for Demo Forest 2021. Plans include talks on the importance of on-site segregation to minimise bin contamination from the onset, and a demonstration area educating attendees on how to sort waste.



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