

**TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN**

23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020

**GENERAL STATEMENT FROM EFIBCA AND EUROJUTE**

**RE: COVID-19 situation and safeguarding uninterrupted supply of essential flexible (plastic) industrial packaging products for vital supply chains**

Dear Sir/Madam,

**The European Flexible Intermediate Bulk Container Association (EFIBCA) and EUROJUTE encourage all international and regional bodies such as the European Commission and all European Governments and Regulators to recognize flexible/plastic industrial packaging manufacturers as “essential” when drafting orders for Lock-down, border closures, restrictive transport measures or otherwise considering similar orders.**

EFIBCA and EUROJUTE recognize the overwhelming challenges which the European Governments, health organizations and local authorities are facing when making decisions aimed at protecting public health across Europe. To safeguard as many lives as possible in the current corona crisis, drastic restrictions on public life have already been announced or are under deliberation. This is particularly relevant when our leaders consider or enforce ‘Lock-down’, border closures, transport restrictions or similar quarantine orders.

**Our members make essential industrial flexible/plastic packaging products, including flexible intermediate bulk containers (“FIBCs”), container liners, shipping sacks, and other plastic packaging for vital industries such as the pharmaceutical, food/agriculture, chemical and oil & gas industries. Disruptions in the availability of these goods would cause significant hardships to consumers across all geographies who depend on steady and stable supplies.**

To provide greater certainty and clarity for our industry’s businesses and employees, we ask for clear exclusion of our members’ manufacturing operations from ‘Lock-down’ orders,

restrictive transport measures or border closures as the flexible/plastic packaging products industry plays an essential role in avoiding disruptions of vital goods and services.

Due to the fact that the FIBC production in the EU is very limited and imports are the real source of FIBCs in the EU, **FIBCs should be considered as priority products when crossing borders either between countries outside the EU and/or within the EU.** First difficulties with the transport by truck between the EU countries have already been experienced, so we ask for refraining from any further potential restrictions to the transport of these goods including keeping alternatives such as rail and ship transport open.

On behalf of the more than 50 manufacturers of FIBC (plastic packaging) in Europe, we also would like to draw attention to the fact that, with the exception of France and Belgium, the national country measures and announcements so far on the important ("system-relevant" or "vital industry") economic sectors do not seem to mention **packaging**, although it **is indispensable for the supply of the population with safe food, protective equipment, medicines and other vital supplies.**

Among others, the **food industry** (e.g. producers of goods such as milk powder, sugar, cacao and coffee) heavily relies on FIBCs for the safe packaging, storage and transport of their goods. **Agriculture**, being one of the key industries in the European Union (EU), will also be severely disrupted if FIBCs are not available for their needs.

Many of our member companies, in particular the manufacturers of packaging for the above-mentioned sectors, are currently under particular pressure. On the one hand, the companies have to struggle with the sickness rate of the workforce and on the other hand already with problems in the supply of raw materials. Our members are concerned that further measures could endanger vital supply chains, including in the food, pharmaceutical industries and oil & gas industries, if they no longer have sufficient access to plastic packaging.

Therefore, in the context of future decisions, we ask you to bear in mind that the supply of food and medicines to the population also depends on the availability of packaging, which is usually made of plastic. This also necessitates that the transport of finished and semi-finished plastic packaging as well as raw materials required for its production throughout Europe is not hindered by unnecessary control measures.

We wish to point out that at present, France has already classified its food industry, including food packaging manufacturers, as a "priority industry" and Belgium has included industrial packaging on its country list of vital industries.

In light of the above, **we ask you to classify industrial flexible and/or plastic packaging also in your country as vital or essential product and thus put it on an equal footing with critical or vital products and services in connection with measures to contain the corona pandemic within the framework of your national legislation.**

If you have any questions regarding our request or wish to discuss in more detail, please contact:

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Kind regards,

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EFIBCA President

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EUROJUTE President

Appendix: Images of FIBCs

