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Climate-smart returnable crates have replaced over two billion packages

The Swedish food industry's smart cycle for load carriers has recently achieved an important milestone. The sustainable crates have now replaced over two billion disposable packages.

“Through our common return system for pallets and crates, the food industry has long seen the benefits of reusing and sharing resources. Although Swedish consumers encounter the grey crates every time they enter a grocery store, few people realise how efficiently and sustainably the country's food is transported from producers out to stores and restaurants,” says Anna Elgh, CEO of Svenska Retursystem.

Half of Sweden's perishables are now distributed in returnable crates. Since the return system started more than 20 years ago, the returnable crates have been sent around the food chain over two billion times. Svenska Retursystem now hopes that this circular way of working will inspire more industries to work more efficiently and reduce their resource consumption.

“We believe that similar initiatives in other industries would increase Sweden's competitiveness. We all need to contribute to the country's long-term transition towards a circular economy,” says Anna Elgh.

Each returnable box sent out saves the equivalent of 219 grams of carbon dioxide equivalents. In 2020 alone, the system saved close to 35,000* tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalents. This corresponds to 26,000 lorry transports from Ystad to Haparanda.

About Svenska Retursystem's climate-smart crates

- They have a lifespan of 15 years and are each used an average 150 times.
- One use involves using the box throughout the flow between the food producer, wholesaler, shop/restaurant and back to the return system's production facilities for cleaning.
- Broken crates are repaired. When they can no longer be repaired, they are sent back to the manufacturer, which grinds them down and uses the material in the production of new crates. In this way, the material lives on for several generations.

* At retursystem.se you can read more about the life cycle analyses behind the carbon savings calculations.

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