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Opportunities for Glass!

That is the overall takeaway from my time at the Sustainable Packaging Coalition (SPC) conference in Denver this week.

The SPC is a growing organization made up of many top professionals in the packaging industries, including representatives from leading consumer packaged goods (CPG) companies, food and beverage brands and retailers.

In addition, many suppliers, sustainability consultants and thought-leaders attend to discuss trends and solutions for packaging sustainability. SPC is among the allied organizations that GPI works with on national and local packaging regulations, as well as recycling infrastructure. I was invited to attend as the glass container industry representative.

Many companies at the SPC have made public commitments to increase the sustainability of their packaging and are looking to meet aggressive goals using recycled material and making the majority of their packaging recyclable going forward. Glass should be a part of their solution.

While our industry has challenges to address to increase our market share of food, beverage and cosmetic packaging, sentiment among attendees remains strong for glass. Many speakers mentioned the premium image of glass as a packaging option, the desire to use more glass, or the inherent knowledge that glass is a preferred choice for natural and sustainable packaging.

As I engaged CPG representatives about what was holding them back from choosing glass more often, they mentioned one of the several common perceptions related to weight, cost, life-cycle analysis metrics or concerns about contractions in glass recycling markets. These will be priority areas of study for GPI as we put together our work plan for 2020 and beyond.

I was left, however, feeling very positive about the opportunities for
Several speakers presented innovative programs for glass recovery, and most companies with aggressive goals for sustainability understand that all food and beverage glass is not only recyclable, but that new refillable and reusable models can help them achieve their goals as well.

Most importantly, the packaging professionals here are realizing that the waste management and recycling systems are in dire need of infrastructure improvement and investment, that consumers want glass recycled, and local government leaders are aggressively looking for partnerships to solve issues that inhibit the collection of glass.

There is work to be done, but the underlying support is there.

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