



Sustainable Wine Roundtable

SWR strategy to deliver sustainability of wine packaging

Developing the *SWR Wine Packaging Accord*

Between now and the end of 2025, SWR intends to develop an evidence backed *Wine Packaging Accord* to provide members with a shared framework to take decisions about wine packaging.

This will be an evolution of the *Wine Bottle Weight Accord* which was launched in October 2023 under which a number of retailers will commit to a phased reduction in the average weight of the bottles they buy from a current average of 550g to a maximum of 420g. This Accord was based on in-depth research conducted by SWR. The creation of a wider SWR Wine Packaging Accord will consist of three phases of work:

- **Supporting implementation of the Bottle Weight Accord:** SWR needs to put in place a set of support structures to support and facilitate the implementation of the Bottle Weight Accord.
- **Creating evidence-based recommendations on wine packaging:** SWR will expand its research to explore and make recommendations on other types of wine bottles, and on alternative formats. This will include a 'choice framework' to support members in taking decisions about packaging formats.
- **Addressing sustainability in the packaging supply chain:** SWR will also examine the sustainability issues involved in the physical journey that packaging takes during its lifetime. This will inform the development of a bulks shipping decision tool, and a bottle miles carbon calculator.

Why support this work?

- **DIRECT COST SAVING**
 - Reducing packaging weight provides direct cost savings to wine businesses:
 - Catena reported [saving \\$2.7m in shipping costs](#) by reducing bottle weight from 590g to 400g
 - One accord member expects their business to save around £300,000 by reducing bottle weight, so reducing liability under upcoming regulations such as [Extended Producer Responsibility](#) in the UK and the EU's [Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive](#).

- **SUPPORT TO INCREASED LEGAL COMPLIANCE**
 - Companies in the wine business are under increasing regulatory requirements to report on sustainability issues in their supply chains, and in particular on their carbon emissions. The various calculators and tools proposed here will allow companies to respond with evidence-backed, reliable data to mandatory disclosure requirements.
- **COST SAVING THROUGH COLLABORATION**
 - Instead of each business having to shoulder the whole cost to develop a policy on packaging issues, collaboration through SWR means that each partner pays only a proportion of the cost.
 - “Through SWR we have arrived at a clear position on bottle weight, and it has only cost us a fraction of what would have been the case had we done it alone.”
- **AUTHORITATIVE EVIDENCE**
 - By drawing together the insights of all of its members, SWR is able to develop a collaborative position in relation to packaging issues which carries more authority than one developed by a single organisation.
 - “We could have done the work on bottle weight on our own, but doing it through SWR gave it much more acceptability.”
- **SHARED BASIS FOR ACTION**
 - If all SWR members are designing their sustainability approaches using the same data and analysis, there is a shared basis for action between different parts of the wine value chain.
- **DELIVERY**
 - SWR can ensure that the commitments made in relation to packaging changes will be delivered because we will proactively ensure that potential problems are identified and addressed in a timely fashion.
- **LEGAL COMPLIANCE**
 - This work will provide greater clarity about sustainability claims being made in the wine sector. This will be key in helping companies to respond to the tightening regulatory framework in places like the EU, and to show they are not ‘greenwashing’.

Stream 1: Implementing the Bottle Weight Accord

It is important that the Bottle Weight Accord is not viewed as a top down edict from retailers. SWR is an industry-wide body, and needs to work with the rest of the industry to ensure that the Accord can be delivered. The following actions will be undertaken to support the implementation of the Accord:

- **Expanding and embedding the Accord:** The Accord is the first global, coordinated approach to reducing wine bottle weight. SWR wants to expand the membership considerably to expand the effect and impact of the Accord. We will also work with journalists and others to publicise the Accord and its impact on sustainability in wine.
- **Collating and publishing data:** To demonstrate credibility of the Accord, and to demonstrate progress over time, SWR will collect from participants their average bottle weight and publish this semi-annually.
- **Ensuring bottle availability:** It is clear that lighter weight bottles are not always available, for example to smaller producers. SWR will work with all its producer members to help map where gaps in bottle availability may exist, and ensure these are addressed.

- **Working along the supply chain:** Retailers will have many suppliers in common. SWR will map these and work to provide a central point of communication within the supply chain. This process will also be facilitated by encouraging producers themselves to join the Accord.
- **Support to filling line management:** SWR will produce a 'how to' guide to be distributed to producers and bottlers to support them in understanding and implementing an changes that may be needed in their filling lines to be able to use lighter bottles.
- **Tools for consumer education:** There is a lack of understanding amongst most consumers about the CO₂ impact of wine bottles. The SWR will develop key messages about bottle weight Accord members can then use with their internal audiences, and with customers

Stream 2: Developing evidence-backed recommendations on wine packaging

The work on wine bottle weight was intended only as the first step in SWR's work to address sustainability in wine packaging. Phase two will use a similar research approach to that which was successful in developing the Bottle Weight Accord. We will focus on the following issues

Optimal bottle weight for sparkling wines

SWR's work to date has focused on the most common wine bottle: 750ml for still wine. There is a need to define the optimal bottle weight for 750ml bottles used for sparkling wines: both champagne method and tank fermented. We will conduct research similar to that undertaken in the past year to make clear recommendations to SWR members.

Alternative formats: Creating a 'choice framework'

Although other formats have lower carbon footprints than glass, but some are associated with other sustainability challenges. Moreover, there are financial and practical considerations which need to be factored in. We will develop a 'choice framework' to support members in taking decisions about their packaging choices, to be able to understand how to balance the relative merits and challenges of different options. This will take account not just of sustainability issues, but also practical and financial issues. The framework will include factors such as the following:

- Customer perceptions of different formats, and what scope exists to shift these over time.
- How do balance different environmental benefits/ challenges:
 - o Glass has a large carbon footprint, but can be recycled.
 - o Plastic packaging produces less carbon, but may contribute to plastic pollution.
- How do relative recycling rates inform packaging choices for different markets
- What cost implications are there in using different formats given the different speed at which filling lines can be operated.
- What is the availability, now and in the foreseeable future of different packaging formats, and when might critical mass exist?

In developing this framework we will adopt a similar approach to that used in developing this year's bottle weight report:

- We will begin by drawing together the significant amount of work which has already been done by SWR members and synthesise that to draw out key learnings, and identify gaps requiring further investigation.
- We will conduct a review of all relevant practitioners and academic and other literature.
- We will undertake interviews with relevant individuals and organisations.

- The information and insight will be drawn together into clear set of conclusions and recommendations which will then form the basis to create an *Alternative Formats Choice Framework*.

Stream 3: Addressing sustainability in the packaging supply chain

Sustainability in wine packaging is not simply about the packaging itself, but about where that packaging comes from, where it is made, how far it is transported before and after it is filled, and how it is disposed of.

Bulk shipping decision tool

Aside from the packaging itself, the most obvious way of reducing the carbon footprint of wine packaging is to make greater use of bulk shipping of wine. Wine exported in bulk, and then bottled in the consumer country has a much lighter carbon impact than those bottled at source and then shipped.

However, bulk shipping may not be cost effective, nor provide significant improvements in carbon footprint over relatively short distances. Moreover, in some origins, there may be trade-offs between carbon emissions and other sustainability factors in a choice to use or not use bulk shipping. For example, in South Africa and Argentina, local bottling creates significant employment in areas where otherwise jobs would be hard to come by.

SWR will conduct research using the same methodology outlined above to explore these issues, and develop a 'bulk shipping calculator' which members can use to decide which of their wines should be bulk shipped. This will include:

- A guide to minimum distances over which bulk shipping is not relevant.
- Insight about other sustainability considerations which are material.

Bottle miles carbon calculator

Whether bulk shipped or bottled at source, the journey a bottle takes from its manufacture through to disposal has a significant carbon footprint, which is currently not well-documented. Using the research approach outlined above, we will develop an understanding of the carbon impact of bottles at each stage of their lifecycle. Indicative phases of bottles' lifecycle is as follows:

Stage of use	Key factors of carbon emission
Raw material extraction	Where does this happen
	Emissions, for example, from diggers and machinery
	Onward transport to manufacturing site
Bottle manufacture	Fuel mix used in the furnace
	Proportion of recycled material used (cullet), and embedded carbon therein
Transporting of empty bottles	Distance between manufacturing site and filling site
	Means of transport used (probably more than one)
Transporting of full bottles	Distance between filling site and destination
	Means of transport used (probably more than one)
Use in retail	Transport distance to retail sites
	Means of transport used
Consumer use	Rate of recycling, reuse and disposal (landfill).

We will then identify reliable approximations (using emissions factors) of the likely CO₂ emitted at each stage, for example:

- Carbon emitted in manufacture per ton of glass by different fuel mixes
- Carbon emitted per kilometre of distance by different forms of transport.

This analysis will then be pulled together into a tool to enable the industry to understand how the carbon footprint of different wines differs given where and how it's packaging was sourced, how that wine was transported, and where it was consumed.

Timeframe and budget:

The development of the SWR Wine Packaging Accord will take place between now and the end of 2024. The final Accord will be launched in January 2026.

	Timeframe	Budget required (£)
Stream 1	October 2023 - ongoing	35,000
Stream 2	2024	45,000
Stream 3	2024	45,000

To discuss your involvement and the funding opportunities available, please contact Tom Owtram (General Manager) - tom@swroundtable.org