Packaging reuse ≠ Packaging waste prevention

When dealing with packaging there seems to be a confusion between reuse and prevention. Despite the fact that both contribute to reducing waste arisings, from a policy making perspective they should be treated as different concepts.

When addressing what is popularly referred to as *"reusable packaging"*, one is in fact referring to two types of processes:

- The action of using a container that is **owned by the consumer** and it is either refilled in the shop or refilled at home. In both cases the container is in fact not packaging but a product, and hence it should be considered as: **packaging waste prevention**.

- The action of using a container that is an asset **owned by the producer or a third party** and/or collected, washed and refilled by a third party. This process is what should be considered as: **reusable packaging**.

Definitions:

Packaging waste prevention => packaging designed to be refilled and which is owned by the consumer. It includes operations such as refill on the go (i.e. refill your water bottle in a public fountain) and refill at home (i.e. from concentrates such as soda stream).

Reusable packaging => packaging which has been conceived, designed and placed on the market to accomplish within its lifecycle as many trips or rotations in a system for re-use and whose actual return and reuse is made possible by adequate logistics and promoted by suitable incentive systems.

Measures supporting packaging waste prevention (non exhaustive list):

- Setting an **overall packaging waste prevention target**
- Setting a **cap on the overall single-use packaging placed in the market**.
- Applying **levies/taxes on single-use packaging**.
- **Restricting the use of single-use packaging for certain applications**, such as onsite consumption of food and beverages.
- Encouraging refillable packaging alternatives to be made available by any restaurant, cafe, or shop selling food or drinks to consume on the go.
- Encouraging or obliging retailers selling food, drinks, and non-hazardous cleaning products to accept that consumers bring their own container (duly washed container).
- Encouraging online retailers to offer an 'opt-out' option for free-packaging delivery of products whose own packaging is already suitable for shipment.

Measures supporting packaging reuse (non exhaustive list):

- Setting an **overall reuse target** of 50% by 2030 for all packaging placed on the EU market, thus sending a strong signal to all market sectors to kick-start the transition.
- Setting **sector-specific reuse targets** or dedicated targets per packaging type.
- Encouraging **deposit-return schemes (DRS) for refill/reuse** beyond beverage packaging.
- Defining **essential requirements for pool systems** and providing guidelines on their set-up and operation.
- Setting **general parameters for aligning standardising packaging design** and return incentives across brands and companies in a way that enables sharing of container collection points, washing facilities, and logistics, including a minimum number of cycles (re-uses), labelling, digital tags (QR codes), reuse symbols, among other product design requirements.