

ALUMINUM VS. BIOPLASTICS FOR BEVERAGES



Bioplastics are an increasingly popular way to make single-serve beverage packaging sustainable, but aluminum cans may still be best ... or are they?



RECYCLING RATES

Aluminum cans have a higher recycling rate than plastic containers. Consumers recycle 45.2% of cans but, for example, just 20.3% of PET bottles.

Source: The Aluminum Assn., [“The Aluminum Can Advantage: Sustainability Key Performance Indicators”](#)

CONSUMER CONFUSION

Many bioplastics are visually identical to conventional plastics, leading consumers to contaminate recycling streams with non-recyclable packaging.

Source: Life Cycle Initiative, [“Single-use beverage cups and their alternatives”](#)



ACCEPTANCE

While bioplastics are compostable, only 125 composting facilities in the US accept them.

Source: Sustainable Packaging Coalition / GreenBlue, [“Composting Facilities in the United States”](#)

ENERGY TO PRODUCE

Polylactic acid (PLA) – the most widely used bioplastic – consumes roughly 66% less energy to produce than conventional plastics. Comparatively, recycled aluminum used 95% less energy vs. raw ore

Sources: National Library of Medicine, [“Bioplastics for Food Packaging: Environmental Impact, Trends and Regulatory Aspects”](#) and ScienceDirect, [“Making sustainable aluminum by recycling scrap: The science of “dirty” alloys”](#)



PREFERENCE

Despite recycled metal’s advantages, consumer perceptions show a preference for bioplastics. In the US, 61% of consumers say compostable plastics are “very sustainable,” while just 37% say the same about metal containers.

Source: McKinsey & Co., [“Sustainability in packaging 2023: Inside the minds of global consumers”](#)

