

## EU recycling drive raises stink around camembert packaging

November 15 2023, by Anne-Laure MONDESERT

---



The signature wooden packaging around camembert cheese is under threat from an EU recycling drive.

Could the distinctive thin wood packaging around France's famed camembert cheese be under threat from the EU's recycling drive?

That's the fear makers of the soft cow-milk comestible from Normandy face—and French EU lawmakers have hastily stepped up to address.

On Wednesday, MEPs in the European Parliament, at the behest of its French members, introduced amendments to protect camembert's round wooden containers from the scope of an EU bill.

That legislative text, presented by the European Commission last year, aims to reduce waste notably by setting recycling targets for all [packaging](#) from 2030.

The packaging industry has lobbied fiercely to water down the legislation.

"The wooden boxes used to package cheeses like camembert don't have a dedicated recycling circuit because it would be too costly to create a logistic chain," said Stephanie Yon-Courtin, an MEP originally from Normandy.

She is part of the centrist Renew Europe group in parliament, which encompasses lawmakers from French President Emmanuel Macron's Renaissance party.

Their amendment seeks to spare wooden packaging from the recycling law.

That would apply not only to the traditional camembert cylinder, but also to France's Mont d'Or [cheese](#) as well as the wooden baskets in which oysters and berries are sold in French open-air markets.

The amendment also wants to keep wax packaging out of the recycling law, which would apply to Mini Babybel cheeses made by French company Groupe Bel and popular as a snack.

## Be 'pragmatic': minister

The Renew lawmakers want the commission to first come up with a report on available facilities to recycle these types of packaging, as well as an impact study on what recycling them would do for the environment.

"Before demanding wooden box recycling, there is much to do on plastic packaging," argued another Renew MEP, Jeremy Decerle, who used to lead a union for young French farmers.

France's European Affairs Minister Laurence Boone has lent her voice to the debate, telling a number of journalists on Tuesday the measure could inflame the rural electorate ahead of EU elections in June next year.

"If you want to caricature Europe before the election, you start by annoying camembert producers and their wooden packaging... that makes everybody sit up," she said.

Recycling was a necessity, she noted, and companies needed to be prodded to up their use of recyclable packaging material.

But "there needs to be some pragmatic realism and not annoying camembert makers," she said.

Other amendments on the [recycling](#) law have also been lodged by French MEPs from other political groupings on the center-right and far-right—who often defend farmers' interests—to exclude wooden packaging.

But a German lawmaker, Delara Burkhardt, from the leftist Socialists and Democrats grouping, gave less heed to the arguments springing up

around the emblematic French cheese.

"The requirement for camembert wooden packaging to be recyclable must remain," she told AFP.

© 2023 AFP

Citation: EU recycling drive raises stink around camembert packaging (2023, November 15)  
retrieved 29 April 2024 from  
<https://phys.org/news/2023-11-eu-recycling-camembert-packaging.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.