

Joining up in Russia



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Modernising dairy products and packaging is picking up speed in Russia as its industry enjoys significant growth. Global dairy brand Danone is strong across the region, with its dedication to delivering both traditional dairy favourites alongside creating updated products that meet changing trends supported by its packaging partner, RETAL.

As the biggest country in the world, Russia spans over 17 million km and 11 time zones, making it about 2.5 times larger than the rest of Europe put together. Russia currently has just eight million dairy cows which, when compared with 22.6 million in Europe, with Russia importing around 25% of its raw milk. The Russian dairy industry is enjoying steady growth of over 7% year on year, with the government keen to support its domestic production of raw milk from its current position of 31million tonnes annually to 34 million tonnes by 2024.

This support and the long-term presence of global dairy brands in the Russian market means that this is a positive time for development and innovation. Danone, which sells its products in over 120 markets and generated sales of over €25 billion in 2018 of which around 52% came from dairy and plant-based products, is active in Russia. Since 2010 when Danone first partnered with Unimilk, one of Russia's key milk producers, the companies merged their fresh dairy operations and have subsequently seen rapid growth, leading to Russia's position as one of Danone's five key global markets.

By 2025, Danone plans to increase rPET use in its packaging to 25% and by 2025, all its packaging will be either reusable, recyclable or compostable.

Convenience and economy

Danone Russia's press service shares how supporting consumers' increasing demand for more sustainable packaging solutions drives its ongoing circularity focus, "We have recently introduced a larger 1.5 litre milk container to address the increasing demand for bigger formats, which is a more affordable solution. Our Prostokvashino brand offers a novelty, selected milk in the new 1.5l format; it's where convenience meets economy. The shape has been carefully designed to make the bottle easy to grip, pour and store in the fridge."

Danone works with plastic packaging manufacturer RETAL to produce responsible plastic packaging for its growing dairy sector in Russia, including its recently repurposed production line for a Danone dairy brand popular in Russia, called Procomac. By using larger format containers, less PET is used for higher volumes of product within, it is lighter to transport, and is fully recyclable. Danone Russia's press service continues: "Our existing Procomac line has been overhauled; we have formatted parts on all the equipment, replaced some units, and had the conveyors adjusted to the new format. Essentially, the overall milk production process has been modernised."

RETAL key account manager, Russia, Olga Rovenskaya, works closely with her Danone counterparts to ensure that collaboration is positive and productive. She explains how recent months have helped to highlight their ongoing projects, saying, "I think it's interesting to note how even during the coronavirus challenges of 2020, Danone has been able to find the strength to launch new products, particularly products that take into account the specific needs of often poorly-protected sections of the region's population, such as larger families on lower incomes. This larger 1.5l format uses a RETAL preform and we are pleased to be able to work with Danone to deliver this well-received dairy product to the Russian market, making dairy products more available to consumers."

Responsible packaging

Danone's development of the 1.5l milk format for its Prostokvashino brand started much earlier than 2020, following a design collaboration with the company producing the SIPA Zoppas blow moulding machine and laboratory research conducted in Italy. Danone Russia adds, "After confirming the blowing parameters and bottle resistance to loads on a pilot mould set, the main mould set was ordered, and tests continued at our production site."

RETAL produces the 1.5l preforms for Danone at its Mytishchi site, which is just one of the sites where it produces for its partner. Rovenskaya notes: "The Danone Prostokvashino Milk 1.5l project has been important for RETAL as we continue our positive shared relationship. To work with a global brand that recognises its ability to positively contribute to corporate social responsibility through the enhanced circularity of its packaging is what drives RETAL. We produce PET packaging that uses less virgin material to contain more healthy foods and drinks, particularly for the families that need it most."

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