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DIVE BRIEF

Nestlé to use recyclable, light-blocking shrink sleeves on some beverage products

The company is hoping the crystallized PET sleeves will play a role in bottle-to-bottle circularity for Nesquik and Coffee mate products, among others.

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Courtesy of Nestle

Dive Brief:

- Nestlé announced Friday that by June it will begin using a new recyclable shrink sleeve label on its line of seven ready-to-drink Nesquik flavored milk products. The company says the cap, bottle and sleeve can all be recycled together in the U.S.
- The crystallized PET sleeves were designed with "light-blocking print technology" to preserve shelf life – an important feature for protecting these drinks, whose taste, color and vitamin levels can be susceptible to being impacted by light, the company said. Nestlé did not disclose its packaging supplier.
- As it aims for bottle-to-bottle circularity, Nestlé intends to apply the new sleeve technology, which it said was developed through five years of R&D, to other beverage products, including some in its Coffee mate, natural bliss and Nestlé Sensation lines.

Dive Insight:

B + W EX2005
Multi-Color v. Brook + Whittle
PGR2025-00025

Shrink sleeves, when they use certain materials, inks and adhesives, can be a common barrier to proper bottle recycling. Problematic label constructions landed on the U.S. Plastics Pact's list of problematic and unnecessary materials.

Some companies are working to eliminate label wraps altogether by testing embossing and laser-engraving logos and information. Others are exploring wash-off labels. Label companies including CCL and Brook + Whittle have also rolled out light-blocking shrink sleeves that they say are recyclable.

Nestlé said the Nesquik packaging conversion represents its first product on the shelf that features a recyclable shrink sleeve with light-blocking technology.

The company said it explored multiple suppliers, materials, aesthetics and other factors. "This included light transmittance tests across more than 20 candidate materials, product shelf life studies, and the completion of plastics recyclability tests to ensure the new shrink sleeve and inks would remain compatible with the U.S. recycling system," the company said in its announcement. Recycling tests included checking for proper sorting at MRFs and ink washability.

Globally, Nestlé is working to design more than 95% of its plastic packaging for recycling by 2025; it hit 83.5% in 2023. With the Nesquik update, "an estimated 4,500 metric tons of PET plastic will be easier for consumers to recycle each year and more likely to be sorted accurately at recycling facilities," the company said in its announcement.

Also by 2025, the company is trying to slash virgin plastics use by one-third from a 2018 baseline; in 2023 it was just 14.9% of the way there.