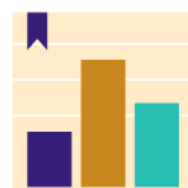




Empowering the transition to sustainable packaging

CONAI EPR tools and services for businesses

May 2025





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Executive Summary

As Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) policies evolve, Producer Responsibility Organizations (PROs) have become essential in guiding companies toward environmental compliance. In Italy, CONAI (Consorzio Nazionale Imballaggi) plays a central role, operating as a private, non-profit EPR system that enables packaging producers and users to meet recycling and recovery obligations.

With over 28 years of experience, CONAI coordinates the collection and recycling of packaging materials—such as steel, aluminum, paper, plastic, wood, bioplastics, and glass—through a model of shared responsibility involving businesses, public institutions, citizens, and recyclers. It offers to businesses a suite of tools and services to support ecodesign, recyclability, and resource efficiency, helping companies reduce their environmental impact and align with circular economy goals.

Recognized at the European level, CONAI contributes to shaping sustainable packaging policies and best practices. Its integrated approach—blending innovation, consultancy, and practical solutions—positions it as a strategic partner for companies navigating an increasingly complex regulatory and economic landscape.

CONAI EPR tools for businesses

Introduction

In the evolving regulatory landscape of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) policies, the role of Producer Responsibility Organizations (PROs) is becoming increasingly strategic in ensuring business compliance with environmental obligations. The growing focus of European and national institutions on the ecological transition and circular economy is shaping a regulatory framework that requires companies to rethink their approach to packaging design, production, and end-of-life management.

In this scenario, CONAI (Consorzio Nazionale Imballaggi) stands as a key reference point. As a private, non-profit EPR scheme, CONAI serves as the mechanism through which packaging producers and users in Italy ensure compliance with recycling and recovery targets set by regulations. For over 28 years, it has operated as an efficient system for the recovery, recycling, and enhancement of packaging materials, including steel, aluminum, paper, wood, plastic, bioplastic, and glass. Its effectiveness is based on the principle of shared responsibility, involving all stakeholders: businesses that produce and use packaging, public administrations that regulate waste management, citizens who engage in separate waste collection, and recycling companies that transform waste into secondary raw materials.

To support businesses, CONAI provides a comprehensive set of services and tools aimed at promoting the development of recyclable and environmentally friendly packaging, strengthening the sustainability of the Italian production system. Through innovative solutions for packaging prevention and ecodesign, CONAI enables companies to assess and enhance the environmental performance of their packaging by implementing strategies focused on material reduction, recyclability, and end-of-life optimization. These initiatives help businesses not only comply with current regulations but also gain a competitive advantage, accelerating the transition toward more sustainable and innovative production models.

With its extensive experience, CONAI has become a benchmark at the European level, actively contributing to discussions on best practices for ecodesign policies and supporting institutions in defining effective strategies for sustainable packaging management. Its approach, combining innovation, consultancy, and operational tools, represents a successful model of collaboration between businesses,

institutions, and industry players, fostering a more efficient and sustainable packaging system.

In light of these considerations, this paper explores CONAI's pivotal role in providing cutting-edge solutions for environmental compliance and packaging ecodesign, demonstrating how its initiatives serve as a strategic driver for companies navigating an increasingly dynamic regulatory and economic landscape.

Prevention as a core of CONAI's strategy

Prevention lies at the heart of CONAI's activities, playing a crucial role in supporting businesses and promoting initiatives that reduce the environmental impact of packaging. As established by Legislative Decree 152/2006, CONAI is responsible for developing an annual General Prevention Program, outlining actions aimed at improving the sustainability of packaging solutions.

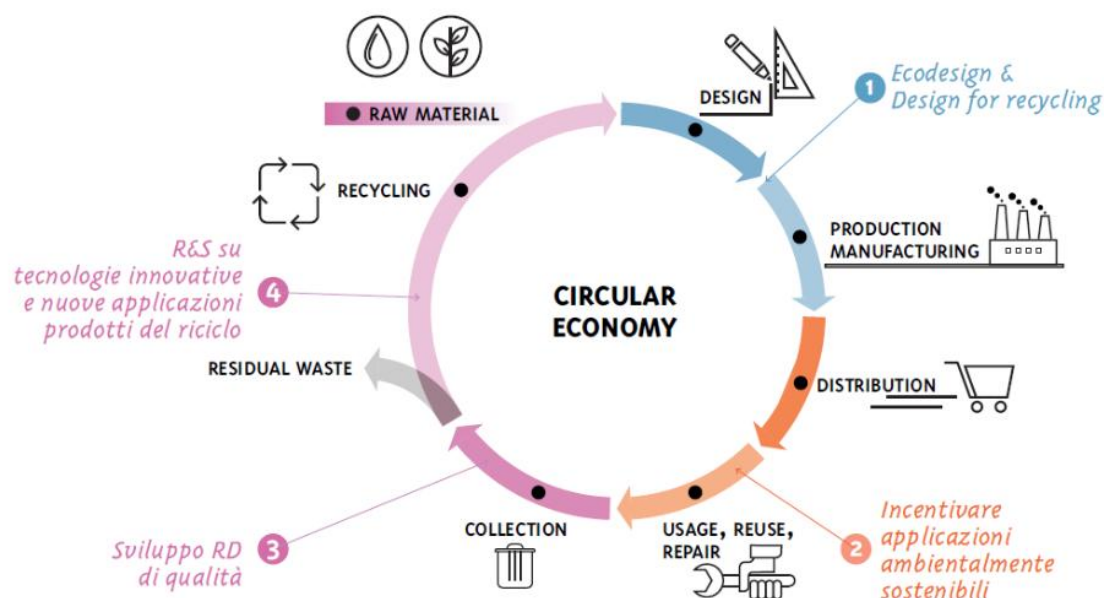
Specifically, CONAI's prevention efforts focus on two main areas:

- I. **Structural initiatives**, such as the modulation of the Environmental Contribution (CAC)¹ based on the actual recyclability and reusability of packaging, encouraging companies to adopt more sustainable materials and designs. In this regard, the contribution fee, applied in euros per tonne based on the quantity of packaging placed on the market, constitutes one of the structural or systemic prevention measures, as it incentivizes the stakeholders involved — namely packaging producers and users — to identify environmentally sustainable packaging solutions, also with the aim of minimizing the associated economic impact (e.g., the lighter the packaging, the lower the amount of fee due).
- II. Awareness and business support initiatives, embodied in the "Pensare Futuro" (**Thinking Future**) project, which offers prevention and ecodesign tools to help companies optimize their packaging choices and minimize environmental impact.

¹ <https://www.conai.org/download/fee-modulation/>

Prevention is the starting point of CONAI's circular economy strategy, which extends across the entire packaging value chain, bringing together diverse stakeholders—often with conflicting interests—within a coordinated governance framework. This inclusive approach fosters a shared responsibility model between public and private entities, ensuring that sustainability efforts are both effective and widely adopted.

Beyond compliance, CONAI's prevention initiatives drive real change by encouraging businesses to integrate sustainability into their core strategies, making packaging more efficient, recyclable, and aligned with future regulatory and market demands. By addressing every stage of the packaging lifecycle, CONAI positions itself as a leading force in sustainable packaging innovation, setting an example not only in Italy but across Europe.



Main eco-design and prevention instruments developed by CONAI

To achieve those prevention and eco-design goals, CONAI provides businesses with a series of innovative tools and practical resources designed to facilitate packaging design and recyclability.

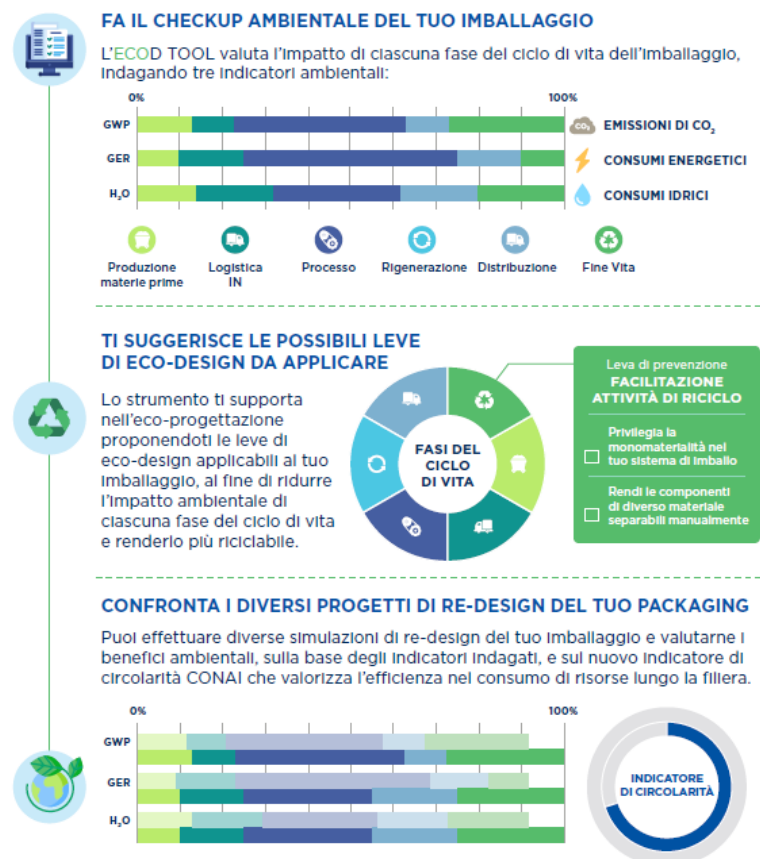
The main available tools include:

- I. **The e-mail service address epack@conai.org**: a dedicated support service for businesses addressing issues related to environmental labelling and sustainable packaging design. Through this service, companies can receive

regulatory clarifications, practical advice, and personalized recommendations to improve the eco-compatibility of their packaging.

II. **The "Progettare Riciclo"² web platform:** a portal that compiles guidelines and best practices for designing recyclable packaging. This platform provides detailed and updated design guidance, improving packaging quality and its compatibility with recycling processes.

III. **The EcoD Tool³:** The EcoD Tool is an ecodesign instrument developed by CONAI to support companies in the environmental assessment of their packaging and the implementation of improvement actions. This tool, available through a usage license, allows businesses to conduct simplified life cycle assessments (LCA) of their packaging, using key indicators such as Global Warming Potential (GWP), Gross Energy Requirement (GER), and Water Footprint (WF).



² <https://www.progettarericiclo.com/>

³ <https://www.ecotoolconai.org/>

The tool is based on prevention levers, which are strategic actions that companies can adopt to optimize the sustainability of their packaging:

- **Reuse**, promoting the design of reusable packaging to reduce resource consumption.
- **Raw material savings**, by reducing the weight and volume of packaging without compromising performance.
- **Logistics optimization**, improving transport and storage processes to lower environmental impact.
- **Facilitation of recycling processes**, by selecting more recyclable materials and simplifying component separability.
- **Use of recycled material**, reducing the consumption of virgin raw materials and encouraging the circular economy.
- **Simplification of packaging systems**, eliminating unnecessary elements and favoring more efficient solutions.
- **Optimization of Production Processes**, which means the implementation of innovative packaging production processes capable of reducing energy consumption per unit produced, minimizing production waste, or, in general, reducing the use of production inputs.

The **EcoD Tool** thus serves as a **strategic support** for **member companies**, helping them not only comply with current regulations but also **enhance their sustainability strategies** and improve their competitiveness in the market.

For further information or to access the tool, companies can contact **CONAI** at ecotoolconai@conai.org.

- IV. **The website dedicated to environmental labelling of packaging**⁴, which offers businesses:
- Guidelines for correctly indicating mandatory information on packaging;

⁴ <https://www.etichetta-conai.com/>

- Recommendations on voluntary information that can be included to enhance environmental transparency;
 - Guidelines on using digital channels to communicate environmental labeling information;
 - Insights on the new Directive 825/24/EU, aimed at consumer protection and preventing greenwashing;
 - An interactive tool that, based on user-provided information, generates a prototype label with the required regulatory information for packaging;
 - A FAQ section addressing common questions from businesses.
- V. **IdentiPack Environmental Labeling Observatory**⁵, a project by CONAI and GS1 Italy, aimed at monitoring the presence of environmental information on product packaging. Its goal is to enhance market knowledge, track consumption trends, and provide businesses with analytical tools and insights to support strategic and sustainable decision-making.
- VI. **The development of a support document to help businesses** comply with the new prevention and sustainability requirements set out in **the Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR)**, published in the European Official Journal on January 22 and entered into force on the 11th of February.
- VII. **EcoPack – The CONAI Call for Ecodesign tenders**: One of CONAI’s most impactful initiatives in this field is EcoPack – The CONAI Call for Ecodesign, a tender program launched in 2013 to reward and promote innovative and sustainable packaging solutions on the Italian market. This annual initiative is open to both packaging manufacturers and users who invest in low-impact solutions. The competition evaluates both new packaging designs and improvements to existing packaging, assessing their environmental benefits using the Eco Tool, an analytical instrument validated by an independent certification body. For the 2024 edition, CONAI allocated a total prize pool of €600,000, distributed as follows:

⁵ <https://osservatorioidentipack.it/>

- €550,000 proportionally awarded based on the environmental performance score of all eligible cases.
- €50,000 awarded by the Extended Technical Committee to projects that demonstrated exceptional innovation and design, particularly in one or more of the following ecodesign strategies:
 - Reuse
 - Facilitation of recycling processes
 - Use of secondary raw materials
 - Additionally, two exemplary packaging solutions were awarded for introducing new technologies and significant design innovations.

In 2024, **248 projects** were awarded out of **414** submissions. These innovative packaging solutions achieved measurable environmental benefits, including:

- A 27% reduction in CO₂ emissions,
- A 20% decrease in energy consumption,
- An 18% reduction in water usage.

VIII. **differENTI**⁶, a platform that gathers key information on how local authorities implement circular economy principles through separate waste collection and waste prevention initiatives to reduce environmental impact. The platform was strongly advocated by CONAI to make official data, research findings, and insights from various observatories available to citizens, experts, researchers, and enthusiasts. Its goal is to centralize and simplify access to information on the daily efforts for a circular economy, highlighting the concrete actions of local authorities and citizens across nearly 8,000 Italian municipalities—a commitment that has made Italy a leader in the recycling industry.

In addition to these tools, CONAI promotes a series of training and informational activities for businesses. These initiatives, often organized in collaboration with trade

⁶ <https://www.differenti-conai.com/>

associations, take place as seminars and webinars under the CONAI Academy format and cover a wide range of topics, including:

- IX. **Management of packaging and packaging waste**, focusing on:
Consortium obligations, such as the application of the CONAI Environmental Contribution (CAC) and membership procedures;
- Ecodesign and strategies to reduce the environmental impact of packaging;
- Environmental labeling and correct communication of information to end users.
- X. **Broader topics related to waste management and sector regulations**, with particular attention to existing legislation and new European directives.
Beyond initiatives dedicated to ecodesign, CONAI provides businesses with a series of services and tools to support them in meeting their consortium obligations, including:
- **Customer service support**, addressing questions and assisting with membership and environmental contribution procedures;
 - **The Environmental Contribution Guidance**⁷, a detailed document helping companies understand how to apply the CAC based on the materials used;
 - **Webinars and training seminars**, dedicated to businesses seeking to deepen their understanding of packaging regulations and practices;
 - **The "Packaging Code" tool**⁸, which helps identify the correct environmental contribution to apply to different types of packaging.

CONAI as a catalyst for sustainable packaging transformation

All the eco-design and prevention tools provided by CONAI are completely free of charge, offering businesses a unique opportunity to enhance their environmental sustainability, reduce operational costs, and optimize their packaging management while ensuring full compliance with evolving regulations. By integrating innovative solutions into their production processes, companies can not only meet legal requirements but also gain a competitive edge in an increasingly sustainability-driven market.

⁷ <https://www.conai.org/download/guida-al-contributo-ambientale-2025/>

⁸ <https://codiceimballaggio-conai.org/>

As the regulatory landscape continues to evolve, CONAI remains a key reference point for the sector, providing concrete and targeted solutions to assist businesses in navigating the transition toward a circular economy. The consortium's role extends beyond simply supporting compliance; it acts as an active driver of change, guiding companies toward packaging solutions that are more efficient, recyclable, and aligned with long-term environmental goals.

Beyond business support, CONAI works closely with institutions and regulatory bodies to influence and promote policies that encourage sustainable packaging production and the improvement of recycling infrastructures. One of the key instruments in this regard is the promotion of **Green Public Procurement (GPP)**, an approach through which public administrations integrate environmental criteria into their purchasing processes to foster the development of more sustainable goods and services. CONAI contributes to the advancement of GPP by providing two distinct sets of guidelines: one tailored to businesses "**Green Public Procurement and CAM – Packaging**", which offers practical guidance for companies participating in public tenders requiring compliance with Minimum Environmental Criteria (CAM)⁹; and another addressed to public administrations "**Green City and Green Procurement – Guidelines on GPP and CAM**", which supports the drafting of environmentally responsible tender documents¹⁰. Through these initiatives, CONAI reinforces its commitment to aligning market practices with national and European sustainability objectives.

Equally important is CONAI's commitment to education and awareness. Through communication campaigns, strategic collaborations with media, institutions, and trade associations, and direct engagement with citizens and businesses, CONAI actively fosters a culture of recycling and ecodesign. By promoting knowledge-sharing and best practices, the consortium plays a crucial role in shaping more responsible production and consumption habits, ensuring that sustainability principles extend across the entire value chain.

Ultimately, CONAI's efforts in prevention and ecodesign are not only about compliance but about transformation. By empowering businesses with the right tools

⁹ CONAI – *Green Public Procurement and CAM – Packaging. Guidelines for companies participating in public tenders.* Available at: <https://www.conai.org/download/green-public-procurement-e-cam-imbballaggi/?tmstv=1744034213>

¹⁰ CONAI – *Green City and Green Procurement – Guidelines on GPP and CAM for Public Administrations.* Available at: <https://www.conai.org/download/linee-guida-su-gpp-e-cam-per-le-pubbliche-amministrazioni/?tmstv=1744034213>

and fostering collaboration among key stakeholders, CONAI is helping build a future where packaging is designed for circularity, waste is minimized, and sustainability is embedded in every stage of the packaging lifecycle. This holistic approach positions CONAI as a pioneer and a model at both national and European levels, demonstrating that sustainable innovation is not only possible—but essential for the future of packaging.



About Conai

CONAI, the National Packaging Consortium, is a private non-profit consortium owned by the industries. It is a system forming the response from private companies to a problem of collective interest, i.e. the environment, in accordance with the guidelines and objectives set by the political system. Around 700,000 companies which produce or use packaging have joined the Consortium System and CONAI oversees the activities and guarantees the recovery results of 7 Consortia: steel (Ricrea), aluminium (Cial), paper/cardboard (Comieco), wood (Rilegno), plastic (Corepla), bioplastic (Biorepack) and glass (Coreve), ensuring the necessary link between these Consortiums and Public Administration.

