

A photograph of the Aurora Borealis (Northern Lights) in a snowy, mountainous landscape. The aurora displays vibrant green and blue light patterns against a dark, starry night sky. The snow-covered mountains and the calm water in the foreground reflect the light, creating a serene and majestic scene.

# ANNUAL REPORT 2020

INFINITUM



Infinitem owns and manages the Norwegian deposit return scheme (DRS). Our aim is for all DRS-labelled bottles and cans to be returned. We are working to make the return process itself both efficient and environmentally friendly. Our ambition is for all bottles and cans to be recycled and turned into new high-quality products.

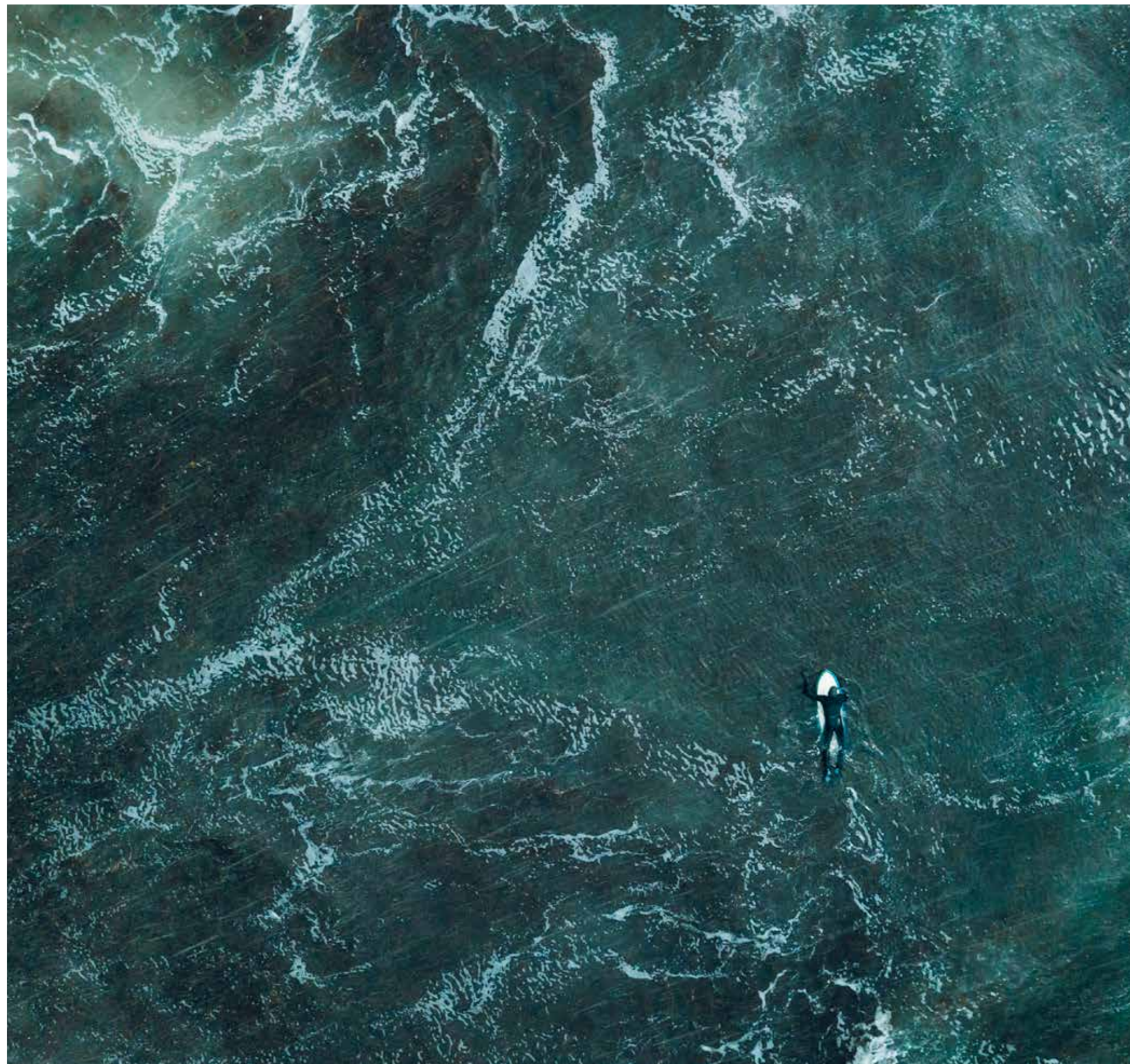
The deposit return scheme has a significant impact on the environment. In 2020, Infinitem achieved a record deposit return rate of 92% and a total collection rate of 98%. All returns are recycled, and Norway is a role model for other countries.

Choosing products with the DRS label and returning all drink containers is one of the easiest and most important things we can all do for the environment, as valuable materials are reused time and again.

INFINITUM

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# Senseless packaging tax

The coronavirus pandemic that struck in 2020 produced a new deposit return record and clearly showed that it is high time for the packaging tax to be removed.

'Grunnavgift' is a specifically Norwegian tax on drinks packaging that "is not re-used in its original form". The tax is NOK 1.27 plus VAT for every single bottle and can, and was originally introduced to protect workers who washed reusable bottles. Now it is doing nothing but harm.

#### Border trade down by 88 percent

Sweden does not have a packaging tax, which is largely what makes beer, soda and water good 'loss leaders' for border trade. Many people have wondered how extensive this trade is, and the border closures resulting from Covid-19 provided new answers, with the number of cans and bottles sold in Norway increasing by a massive 243,546,033 units, up 18.7% on 2019. According to Statistics Norway, border trade declined by more than NOK 14 billion, even though the border was not closed for the entire year.

'Grunnavgift' no longer protects workers as intended, but is helping to drive jobs out of the country. For everyone in the grocery trade on the Norwegian side of the border, 2020 was a bumper year, and the government collected more tax, including on sugar and alcohol.

#### Closure produced deposit return record

Closed borders also contributed to the highest deposit return rate ever. A massive 92% of all cans and bottles were returned. A Norwegian deposit on all the packaging in the home motivates people more to do what we ask and return everything. Without 'Grunnavgift', the deposit return rate would probably be as high or higher every year.

If the motive of protecting jobs is left out of the equation and 'Grunnavgift' is seen purely as a tax for limiting the use of recyclable packaging, it stands out as Norway's strangest environmental levy. For one thing, it is unreasonably high: Imposing NOK 1.27 plus VAT in tax on a can weighing 14.5 grams means that 'Grunnavgift' is more than NOK 100 per kilo, or NOK 100,000 per tonne. On top of which, no other materials on the Norwegian market are recycled into the same product to such a large extent.

#### Time for a rethink

When the packaging tax was introduced, it was believed that washing bottles and transporting soda and beer crates around the country was better than crushing and recycling. Now we know that the most eco-friendly option is mechanical recycling so that the materials can be used time and again in new cans or bottles. The tax is therefore completely outdated.

The drinks manufacturers, retailers and the government benefited enormously from increased sales when closed borders limited the impact of the packaging tax. We collected more than ever before, and more than any other country, and all the plastic and aluminium was given a new lease of life. Together, the retail impact and environmental impact are good reasons for rethinking 'Grunnavgift'.



Kjell Olav Maldum  
Managing Director





## More and better measures needed

**The use of recycled plastic must be increased, and Mepex has been looking at measures that will help to achieve this. “The most important measures are new requirements for local authorities and businesses, greater producer responsibility and a material tax on virgin plastic,” says Managing Director Frode Syversen.**

Mepex is an environmental consultancy with broad expertise in waste management and recycling. Through the ‘Plastsamarbeidet’ partnership and several other projects, Mepex is working with the Norwegian Retailers’ Environment Fund and Norner to look at measures for increasing the use of recycled plastic. The goal is to help Norway achieve 50 percent material recycling for all plastic waste by 2025.

“We have to think more about what is put on the market, design products so that they can be recycled, use pricing measures to ensure materials that are less suitable for recycling cost more, and think in terms of a closed loop for more product groups. Infinitum has led the way by having strict requirements for products joining the

deposit return scheme, which has helped to ensure good material quality,” Frode Syversen, Managing Director of Mepex, explains.

Achieving a closed loop and circular economy for plastic will require measures in different parts of the value chain, and the authorities also have an important role to play.

“It is the authorities who largely hold the key to finding a suitable raft of measures. Time is running out if we are to achieve 50 percent material recycling for all plastic waste by 2025,” says Syversen.

**Producer responsibility and tax**  
Mepex has outlined eight measures that would help to increase the use of recycled

plastic, the three most important of which are plastic sorting requirements for local authorities and businesses, improvement and extension of the producer responsibility regulations, and a material tax on virgin plastic.

“It is important to find the right balance between producer responsibility and requirements for the local government sector and private businesses: those who generate the plastic waste. The local government sector must be subject to sorting requirements and invest in capacity, while the producers must be required to help foot the bill,” says Syversen.

According to Syversen, there is a good producer responsibility scheme for plastic

*“Good systems and recycling are what should be ‘rewarded’, and energy recovery does not contribute to either.”*

*Frode Syversen, Managing Director of Mepex*

drinks packaging, but nothing adequate for plastic in general as things stand.

“The producer responsibility scheme for drinks packaging is not enough in itself, however. The tax is also crucial, with the drinks industry being motivated to reduce the environmental levy by collecting as much as possible. There is every indication that the politicians are considering some form of plastic tax in order to put a price on all the environmental and climate problems that plastic causes. It is important that a new tax should not damage Norwegian business, something that the environmental levy on drinks has not done. A plastic tax should therefore be carefully evaluated and Europe should arrive at a joint solution,” says Syversen.

He believes that, in order to take care of environmental problems, any tax that is introduced will have a lot in common with Infinitum’s desire for a tax on virgin plastic, which would encourage increased use of recycled plastic.

“The politicians have to consider where they are going to put the tax in the value chain. It would also be possible to have a tax in two places: a tax on virgin plastic entering the value chain and a carbon tax on fossil-based plastic that is incinerated,” says Syversen.

#### **Ten years of collaboration**

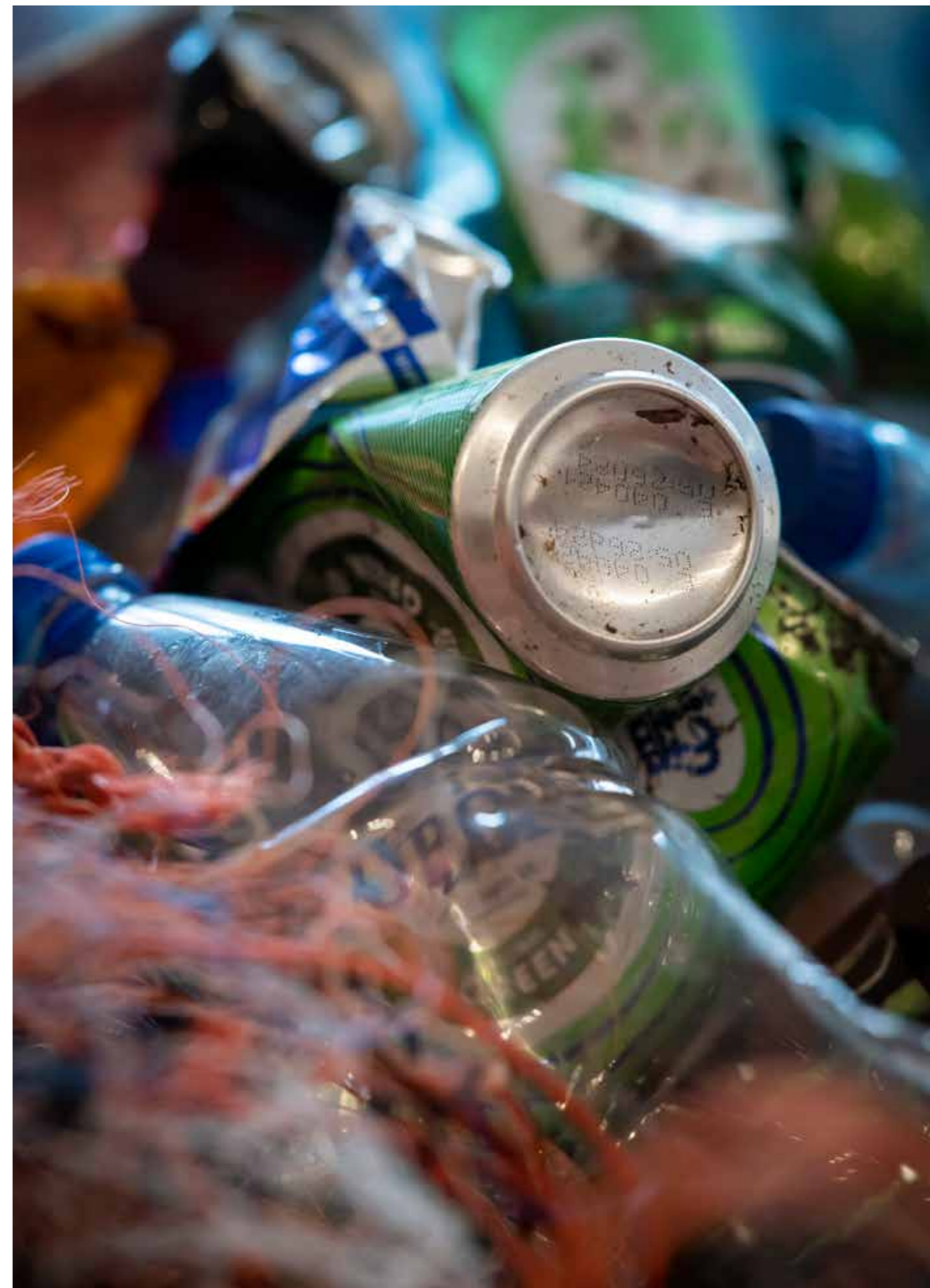
Mepex and Infinitum have been collaborating for a long time. Mepex has been keeping track of deposit packaging that does not come in through reverse vending machines, but is discarded in the form of plastic, metal or general waste. Mepex does this by carrying out waste analyses and random sampling in municipalities throughout Norway. By collecting data on deposit packaging per tonne of waste from a large number of municipalities, Mepex is able to estimate average key figures for the different waste types for the country as a whole.

“We find deposit packaging in all these waste streams. Deposit cans in metal waste are recycled together with other metal.

Deposit cans in general waste go into the incinerator, with the majority coming back out in the ash. They are sorted and sent for material recovery, but the quality is poorer,” he explains.

Both count as material recovery, while plastic bottles incinerated together with general waste count as energy recovery. As the rules stand, both material recovery and energy recovery qualify for an environmental levy rebate. Everything is credited as recovered, with a correction for actual energy recovery.

“Both we at Mepex and Infinitum have proposed that energy recovery should not count, and we have long believed that the authorities would change the drink tax rules, but so far in vain. Good systems and recycling are what should be ‘rewarded’, and energy recovery does not contribute to either,” Syversen concludes.





## “Time that Norway became a driving force for a circular economy”

“Norway needs to step in and become a driving force for a circular economy. As part of this, consumption and waste must be reduced, good systems for recycling residual waste are required, and a tax on virgin plastic is needed,” says the Executive Director of Future in our Hands.

“If there is one thing that the world needs now, it is climate leadership. In just a short time, the new European Commission has launched a climate plan for even greater cuts to emissions and new green jobs, as well as an ambitious new action plan for a circular economy. This is a completely different level of ambition to that shown by our own leaders in their government platform,” says Anja Bakken Riise, Executive Director of Future in our Hands (FIVH).

It is her impression that the Norwegian government is waiting to see what the EU will do.

“It is time that Norway stepped in and became a driving force for a circular economy. The EU is also dependent on countries who take the lead in order to get its climate and environmental policy implemented. This means that the Norwegian government needs to roll up its sleeves and take our share of the emission cuts. In industry, transport, agriculture and the oil and gas sector alike,” says Bakken Riise.

### Start at the base of the waste pyramid

According to FIVH, industry and companies also have to contribute to a more circular economy. Companies must remove harmful environmental toxins from products, increase product lifespan and keep valuable resources in circulation for longer. The recycling rate must go up and the amount of waste down.

“We have to start at the base of the waste pyramid and introduce measures to prevent large amounts of waste occurring in the first place by reducing consumption. All too often, we find this perspective being disregarded or forgotten when politicians and others discuss what we can do to establish a circular economy,” says Bakken Riise.

“Every time a material is recovered, it takes resources and energy, and some material is lost. We should therefore cut down on single-use products as much as possible. Recycling should be the last resort in the circular economy in order to keep materials in circulation longer and give them a new lease of life. That being said, good waste management and recycling systems will be central to the new circular economy,” she explains.

*“Plastic producers and importers should bear responsibility for all plastic products and the plastic loop.”*

### Boost consumer confidence

For more plastic packaging to be included in a closed loop in a circular economy, FIVH believes that there must be a requirement for plastic products to be labelled better.

“What type of plastic the material is made of, the amount of recycled as against virgin plastic, how the product must be handled, where the product is sent for recycling and what it is turned into. This will boost consumer confidence that their efforts at home in the kitchen have an impact,” says FIVH’s Executive Director.

She believes that, in order for recycled plastic to be used more instead of virgin plastic made from oil, plastic products must be designed for recycling to a greater extent.

“A lot of plastic products consist of many different materials and plastic types. Producers should design for recycling, which means designing more homogeneous products. It is also important that legislation and regulations on the addition of chemicals to new plastic should also apply to recycled plastic. It is vital that products are safe for consumers as well as the environment,” says Bakken Riise.

“The market for recycled plastic is currently very poor. Market volume and liquidity are limited, there is not much flow of trade and market prices are very unstable. There is uncertainty regarding the quality and safety of recycled plastic, especially when it comes to additives. If we handle and recycle Norwegian plastic in Norway, we will have more control in this area. Producer responsibility should also be extended and not just apply to packaging. Plastic producers and importers should bear responsibility for all plastic products and the plastic loop,” she says.

### Tax on virgin plastic wanted

FIVH has spoken in favour of introducing a tax on the use of virgin plastic, and on plastic that cannot be recycled. It proposed this in its response to the ‘Climate Cure 2030’ consultation in spring 2020.

“Plastic is very suitable for recycling, but using recycled plastic is not currently profitable because virgin plastic is too cheap. It must pay to be eco-friendly, and it must pay to recycle. So fossil-based plastic should be taxed. It must pay to use recycled plastic rather than virgin plastic, but as things stand the opposite is true. We therefore need a material tax on virgin plastic, and it should reduce in line with the percentage of recycled material used,” says Bakken Riise.



Future in our Hands believes that the authorities must give both producers and consumers an incentive to use alternatives to cheap fossil-based plastic. “The authorities must introduce measures to reduce the amount of unnecessary single-use plastic, minimise consumption and production, improve waste management both inside and outside the home, ensure design for recycling and increase the use of recycled plastic, as well

as facilitating research into new, alternative raw materials and replacements for fossil-based plastic,” Anja Bakken Riise explains. She is of the opinion that the government must set clear objectives in its strategy for a circular economy looking ahead to 2030 and then 2050.

“Both businesses and consumers must contribute to the radical adjustment we will have to go through to achieve a

circular society. But it is important for the government to set clear objectives and frameworks for this adjustment, and to show consumers and companies the way clearly. It must also be willing to use ‘all relevant climate-related measures’, including taxation and legislation,” the Executive Director of Future in our Hands concludes.



# Accounting Norway wants green tax change

**“If green change is to succeed, we need to rethink accounting and taxation. The deposit return scheme is an inspiring example,”** says Christine Lundberg Larsen, CEO of Accounting Norway.



The transition to a more sustainable society will require businesses to change the way they think. A ‘circular economy’ is one of the solutions that is frequently put forward. Products and materials must be reused. Other green trends are a sharing economy and borrowing instead of owning.

“All these good measures are tied up with businesses’ finances, which are closely linked to accounting rules and taxation,” Christine Lundberg Larsen points out. She has been a driving force behind seeing accounting as part of green change.

She cites IKEA’s used furniture business as an example.

“IKEA can buy furniture back from its customers, but then it cannot deduct the VAT in its accounts. But when IKEA resells the furniture, it has to charge VAT on top, making the used furniture too expensive,” she explains.

## **Working to facilitate a circular economy**

Accounting Norway is the industry association for authorised accountants and accounting firms. It has long been

working to get the authorities to adapt the rules more to a circular economy. Lundberg Larsen is also concerned with how taxes can be used intelligently to stimulate sustainability, and thinks that the environmental levy on drinks packaging is inspiring.

“Drinks packaging is subject to a high environmental levy, but it decreases as the proportion of collected and recycled material increases. In this way, the authorities have given businesses a strong incentive to find eco-friendly solutions. The deposit return system and Infinitem

prove that this is an extremely effective solution,” she says.

Infinitem was set up jointly by the retailers and producers to ensure that drinks packaging could be collected and recycled efficiently. The environmental levy is NOK 6.25 for each bottle and NOK 3.75 for each box, but it falls to zero if more than 95% of the packaging is collected and recycled. Thanks to the development of an efficient deposit return system and heavy marketing, Infinitem reached this target many years ago.

## **‘Smart taxes’ motivate businesses**

“‘Smart taxes’ like this that motivate businesses to come up with sustainable solutions are much better than bans and flat taxes that you cannot do anything about,” Lundberg Larsen concludes.

Infinitem is now working to bring about a smart tax that would motivate drinks manufacturers and importers to choose bottles and cans with a high recycled material content. Its reason for doing so is that plastic and aluminium collected

through the deposit return system frequently end up as other products because it is cheaper for manufacturers to choose packaging made from new materials than recycled alternatives.

“A new tax of this sort seems like a sensible solution. Infinitem has shown that smart taxes can have a powerful, motivating effect, and it makes sense to ask the authorities to make further use of this concept to perfect the system,” says Christine Lundberg Larsen in conclusion

# First-rate logistics

**Infinitum moves more than twice as many units as the Norwegian Post, at a fraction of the cost.**

How do you collect and recycle as many of Norway's cans and bottles as possible at the lowest possible cost? This is the question to which Infinitum is constantly finding better answers. After 22 years of operation, it is still making adjustments with a view to perfecting the system.

"Infinitum was created to be as efficient as possible, and that influences everything we do. We take the entire value chain into account when planning our logistics. We both use sales figures and look at consumer habits as a basis for the practical aspects of collecting bottles and cans. That gives us a guide for planning transport and operating our waste sorting plants," says Sten Nerland, Head of Logistics and Operations at Infinitum.

## **Bigger than the Norwegian Post**

A total of 800 million cans and 585 million bottles were returned in Norway last year, and all of them were collected and prepared for recycling at a cost of approximately NOK 0.16 per unit by a company with 60 employees.

Handling nearly 1.4 billion units makes Infinitum more than twice as large a carrier as the Norwegian Post, which transports around 600 million letters and parcels a year. The cheapest stamp costs NOK 18, and the Norwegian Post has many thousands of employees.

"The big difference lies in the consumer's input, of course. Because everyone takes their own drinks home from the store and brings empty cans and bottles back, Infinitum's costs and environmental impact are well below what they would be if the transport chain had to extend to all Norwegian homes. That makes the deposit return system both simple and brilliant," Sten Nerland explains.

## **The industry pays**

The deposit return system also compares very well with other packaging collection and recycling systems.

"Collecting plastic, metal and other sorts of waste from households is very costly. What makes it different from the deposit

return scheme is that consumers pay most of the cost through the local government waste collection charge. The businesses that distribute the packaging on the market contribute, but consumers foot the majority of the bill. The deposit return system, on the other hand, is fully funded by the drinks industry," Nerland explains.

Other collection systems also lag far behind Infinitum in terms of effectiveness. Whereas all 92 percent of the cans and bottles that were returned last year went for recycling, the collection scheme for household plastic waste reports that just 33.5 percent of the plastic is recycled.





## Ready for spring melt

Last year, lorries were queuing up outside Veolia's new facility at Heia, fully laden with equipment. Now it has all been installed and the factory will soon be ready to melt down millions of plastic bottles.



*“The factory had to be started up and run in without the suppliers being present. The phone calls, video calls, testing and troubleshooting were never ending.”*

*Torben Beck, Factory Manager, Veolia PET Norway*

Imagine having to use foreign labour to install a brand-new factory in 2020, Covid-19 year! You can only be impressed by what factory manager Torben Beck and his colleagues at Veolia PET Norway achieved now that the job is done.

When we speak to him in early 2021, he says that the facility at Heia in Fetsund in Lillestrøm Municipality will soon be able to melt down vast quantities of plastic bottles and produce granulate. Plastic granulate is the raw material for making plastic bottles and other plastic products.

“As soon as the authorities relaxed the Covid-19 restrictions a bit in June, we went from full stop to full speed ahead. Thanks to setting up a quarantine zone at the factory, we were able to keep 200 foreign fitters in full action for four months. It was all go right up until the end of September,” says Beck with a grin.

He gesticulates to illustrate all the people swarming about, pulling cables this way and that, and hauling in, unloading and installing equipment.

When things were at their busiest, nine or ten lorries were coming in a day to deliver enormous machines and pieces of equipment from five different suppliers, all of which had to be installed by experts from Germany.

#### **Second wave**

“This start went well. Then the second wave of Covid-19 hit and new quarantine rules for foreign workers came in. This round was more difficult, things came to a bit of a standstill, and we took longer than planned,” Beck goes on.

He estimates that the total delay came to about two months. Definitely acceptable considering the extreme circumstances.

“The factory had to be started up and run in without the suppliers being present. The phone calls, video calls, testing and troubleshooting were never ending. Thanks to great patience, not least on the part of 20 newly appointed colleagues, our factory is now ready for the next phase,” the Factory Manager points out.

#### **Cautious start-up**

The next step is to finish the data system and the technical production system. Production is gradually getting under way, albeit at lower capacity than the facility is designed for.

“We need to be thorough and do the job properly. When everything is ready, we will receive millions and millions of bottles from Infinitum,” says Beck, who looks forward to the day when the bottles flow in and the plastic granulate flows out of the building.

Then it really will be spring melt at Heia.

# Thousands of bottles and cans rescued during X Games

The world's top freestyle skiers and snowboarders came together for the X Games 2020 in Hafjell. 'Protect Our Winters Norway' was on the spot with its 'Pant for pudder' (Recycle for Powder) campaign and made sure that thousands of deposit bottles and cans were recycled.

Words: Torkel Karoliussen Photo: POW Norway

'Protect our Winters Norway' (POW) is winter sports people's very own environmental and climate organisation. POW Norway works to change attitudes and raise awareness of the environment and climate in the skiing and snowboarding community. 'Pant for pudder' is a project that POW Norway has been running in collaboration with Infinitem for several years. The aim is to make it easy and provide motivation for bottles and cans to be returned instead of ending up in the bin.

"For those of us who enjoy a white winter with lots of snow, it makes sense to support schemes and measures that save energy and reduce emissions," says Joakim Giske Tvette, who is responsible for 'Pant for pudder' at POW Norway. POW had set up deposit return points made from recycled oil drums both in the X Games arena in Hafjell and outside. This enabled participants, spectators and the large contingent of organisers, volunteers, press and subcontractors to dispose of empty drinks packaging properly.

"It is well known that a lot of energy drinks are consumed at extreme sports events. There is also an enormous apparatus of people around the event drinking their bottles of cola and other things while the event is on," says Jens Christian Landmark, Environmental Officer for the X Games.

## Collaborating since 2017

Like other festivals and large events, the X Games are committed to reducing their environmental impact, including





*“‘Pant for pudder’ is not just about recycling your bottles and cans. It is about making conscious and right choices because it really has an impact.”*

*Joakim Giske Tvete,  
responsible for ‘Pant for pudder’*

sorting waste and recycling material. Making good arrangements to ensure that deposit bottles and cans are handled properly is a natural and necessary part of this. The X Games have therefore been collaborating with POW on ‘Pant for pudder’ since the action sports festival first came to Hafjell in 2017.

“A good many beverages of a more potent variety are consumed in connection with the evening programme and the concerts in Hafjell too, so the bins outside the entrances and in the arena itself required frequent emptying,” says Sigve Norris, who was in charge of POW’s volunteers during the event.

The organiser of the X Games is largely dependent on volunteers to stage the event, and POW earmarked three people to handle empties and get across the message that actions both large and small are important in terms of the environment and climate. As well as keeping an eye on the recycling bins around the venue, the POW representatives manned an information booth.

“Our booth was opposite the monster truck, so we were strategically positioned

to remind people with an energy drink in their hand. We also had to keep our own energy levels up between stints on the information booth, visits to the hill and experiencing the highlights of the show both during the day and in the evening,” says a smiling Sigve Norris.

**“Making conscious and right choices”**

In addition to the recycling message, the ‘Pant for pudder’ campaign is about raising awareness that each and every one of us has an impact on the environment and climate through our actions, however big or small. This accords with POW’s overall objective of working at both an individual level and with authorities, institutions and businesses internationally.

“‘Pant for pudder’ is not just about recycling your bottles and cans. It is about making conscious and right choices because it really has an impact. We want everyone who loves snow and winter to understand that they can really make a big difference. It is just a matter of starting with something as small as the bottle you have just finished or are about to finish,” Joakim Giske Tvete, who is responsible for ‘Pant for pudder’ at POW Norway, explains.



## 2020 – a busy year and a special one

2020 will be remembered as the year of Covid-19. For Infitum, closed borders resulted in more empties being returned and a busy time for its employees. "We came through 2020 safely and started working with a new Infitum ambassador," says Randi Haavik Varberg.

*“Warholm is every Norwegian’s darling on the athletics track, and an athlete who is constantly extending the limits. This makes him a role model, and someone who can show the way and explain why all bottles and cans should always be put in a reverse vending machine.”*

*Randi Haavik Varberg, Director of Communications at Infinitem*

When Covid-19 hit Norway in early March, Infinitem experienced a brief drop in returns. But it was not long before the empties we had cleared out of our garages and basements resulted in a noticeable increase in the volume of returns.

“We were eager to help ensure that the infection control measures were followed. In spring 2020, we ran an animated film campaign on the reverse vending machines. It reminded people that, if they wash their hands thoroughly afterwards, it is quite safe to return their empties,” says Haavik Varberg, Infinitem’s Director of Communications and Marketing.

The reverse vending machines are designed in such a way that bottles and cans are crushed inside the machine. They go straight down into a large sack, which is sent to Infinitem’s facility. Shop staff do not come into contact with the bottles and cans.

**Returns from unexpected places**

When summer arrived, Infinitem noticed that Norwegians’ holiday patterns were different in 2020, which affected the return pattern. Closed borders resulted in

most people holidaying in Norway and buying Norwegian deposit return drinks.

Based on statistics, Infinitem knows where in Norway summer means higher returns and where lower. Last summer, they found not only that the total return volume was higher than normal, but also that many people were returning empties in different places than they normally would in summer.

“Our employees did a great job over the summer. We managed to reorganise our logistics without it affecting people’s holidays, and without shops noticing the changes we made. It was just as easy to return empties last summer as it always is,” Haavik Varberg explains.

Norway’s borders were also closed for much of the autumn. Consequently, Norwegians continued to return a lot of empties, and the total return rate for 2020 was a record 92 percent.

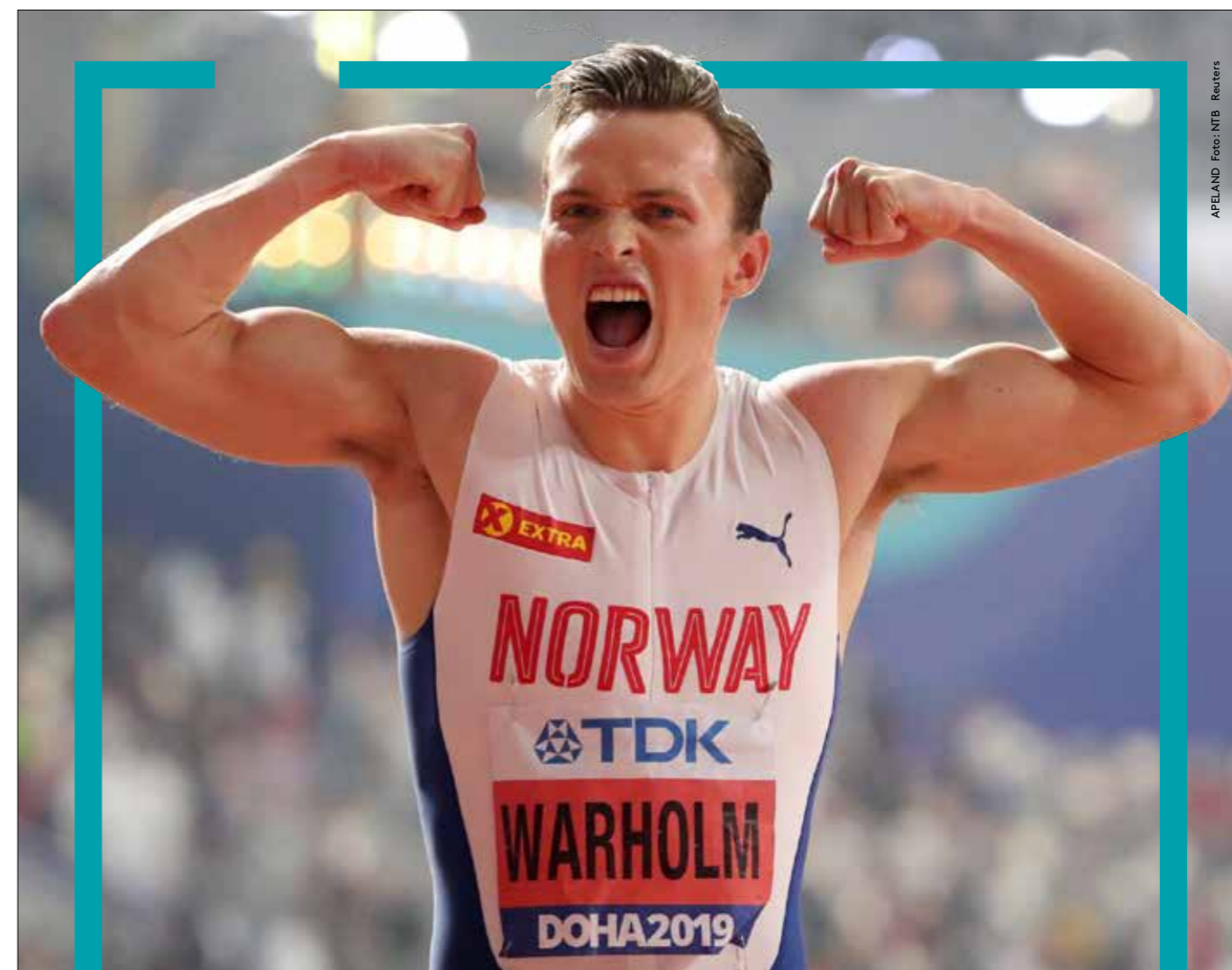
**Warholm is the new ambassador**

Just before summer 2020, Karsten Warholm took over the baton as Infinitem ambassador from Aksel Lund Svindal.

Throughout autumn 2020, Warholm promoted the message that returning empties is giving back what you have borrowed. Every single bottle and can counts when it comes to looking after nature, which we also have on loan.

“Warholm is every Norwegian’s darling on the athletics track, and an athlete who is constantly extending the limits. This makes him a role model, and someone who can show the way and explain why all bottles and cans should always be put in a reverse vending machine. We are looking forward to working more with Warholm in future,” says Haavik Varberg.

In autumn 2020, Infinitem’s facility also made an appearance on NRK. The television campaign supported WWF’s work to combat plastic in the sea. In this context, NRK did some filming at Infinitem’s facility in Heia and broadcast the piece during the television campaign. Viewers learned more about the deposit return scheme for Norwegian plastic bottles and how it contributes to Norway not having a major problem with plastic bottles in the sea, unlike many countries in Southeast Asia.



APELAND Foto: NTB Reuters

# WE ARE ALL WORLD CHAMPIONS!

Karsten Warholm is not just a winner on the athletics track. He is also a world champion in returning deposit cans and bottles, as are you! Norway is the world’s top deposit return country.

As a deposit return ambassador, Warholm reminds us that we have bottles and cans on loan and they must always be returned. All returns are recycled and the environment wins every time!

**INFINITEM**

Deposit every can and bottle.





# From local to national

**The family-owned Aass and Mack breweries have been producing beer since 1834 and 1877 respectively. Until the 2010s, both were local breweries serving their region. Now they deliver nationally and are strongly committed to sustainability.**

Aass Bryggeri is Norway's oldest brewery and has been based in Drammen right from the start. The brewery produces 30 million litres of beer a year, as well as some soft drinks, with their Christmas Soda being the biggest seller.

"We have taken a slightly different path to many breweries and now have 95 percent of everything we produce in aluminium

cans or steel barrels. Aluminium is excellent packaging for looking after beer. It protects it from sunlight and is light to transport, and the material is recycled, so the cans are turned into new cans," says Christian Aass, CEO of Aass Bryggeri.

The efficient use of resources, whether by recycling packaging or in other areas, has been a priority at Aass in recent years.



Their biggest investment has been in modernising and improving the efficiency of their entire operation and production plant.

“We have invested heavily in the future, making the plant more efficient. Some of the solutions we came up with ourselves save us a lot of energy consumption. Among other things, we reuse energy from cooling for brewing and cooking. In 2013 it took 16.8 GWh to produce 19 million beers, while in 2019 it took 12.8 GWh to produce 30 million. Energy consumption per litre has been cut by 50 percent,” Aass explains.

#### **New factory outside Tromsø**

Mack was founded in Tromsø in 1877 and now produces around 20 million litres of beer, as well as Coca-Cola soft drinks for the whole of Northern Norway. After 130 years in the centre of Tromsø, Mack realised that it would have to invest in a new factory in order to compete. In 2012 it moved into a brand-new factory in Nordkjosbotn outside Tromsø.

“In order to satisfy the efficiency and sustainability requirements of Coca-Cola and other customers, we realised that we had to build a new factory. That gave us the opportunity to start from scratch and design it the way we wanted. We increased our efficiency enormously and slashed water consumption,” says Roger Karlsen, CEO of Mack.

One important change that happened at the same time as the move to the new factory involved Mack switching from reusable bottles to recyclable packaging.

“It is the most important change of the last decade in terms of sustainability. We went from getting back return packaging, which was then washed, sorted and transported this way and that between the breweries, to using recyclable packaging, where we

can buy back the material to make new cans and bottles,” Karlsen explains.

In 2014, the brewery went over to wholesaler delivery, which also helped to reduce transport emissions.

“Groupage with other groceries means big efficiency gains and a smaller carbon footprint because the lorries are much fuller than when we were delivering nothing but beer ourselves,” says Karlsen.

#### **Open for national distribution**

When intact bottles no longer had to be sent back to Tromsø after being returned, it became possible for Mack to buy bottle pre-forms containing the bottles they distributed last time around. It also became possible for Mack to expand its market and sell to more of the country.

“We went from being a regional brewery to a national brewery, and have grown enormously in recent years. Our market share nationally has now passed 5 percent, and this year we have seen growth of 45 percent. We have managed to become bigger in our home market of Northern Norway, while investing and growing in Southern Norway. Single-use packaging has also allowed us to grow abroad and we have started exporting to Asia, for example. As a beer producer at home under the northern lights, we believe that we are the Norwegian brewery with the best qualifications to export beer successfully,” says Karlsen.

The switch from reusable bottles to recyclable packaging in 2012 and the change to wholesaler distribution in 2014 were important investments in sustainability for Aass in Drammen too. The transition to wholesaler distribution has also contributed to growth.

“It has been a nice environmental journey, with transport being reduced and lorries carrying less air. Thanks to wholesaler

distribution, Aass is now being delivered to the entire country. This has contributed to growth and we now account for 11 percent of all beer in Norway,” says Christian Aass.

#### **Future commitment to sustainability**

Both Aass and Mack have definite plans for achieving even more sustainability in the next few years. Aass wants 50 percent of its plastic consumption to consist of recycled plastic by 2021.

“We have reduced plastic consumption enormously in recent years and now use thinner plastic. We have gone from 238 grams of plastic wrap per pallet to 130 grams. Plastic is efficient, but it is important to collect it. We are now testing 50 percent recycled material for the shrink plastic and it is going well. On the transport side, we now only have sales vehicles, all of which will be electric by 2025,” says Aass.

“We have both large and small sustainability projects. In one of our smaller projects, we are looking into how we can reduce waste, while one of the larger projects involves switching to 100 percent recycled material in the plastic bottles we produce for Coca-Cola. We have a sustainability project group that is going to go right through the company and interview employees in every department. The aim is twofold, to obtain bottom-up information and suggestions as to how we can improve, and it is important as part of our work to change attitudes. Sustainability is a never-ending process that we are constantly working on,” Roger Karlsen concludes.

# Family factories with short decision lines



**Oskar Sylte is associated with pear soda, while Roma is synonymous with Asina orange soda. Since being founded in the 1920s, the two family-owned soft drinks factories have grown and evolved both on the taste front and in other areas.**

Roma Mineralvannfabrikk in Lillestrøm celebrated its centenary in 2020, but the coronavirus pandemic put a damper on the festivities.

“Roma’s big centenary turned out differently than planned. All the celebrations have been postponed, but we managed to launch a birthday range of Roma’s traditional Ginger Beer. The product was one of the first to be made at ‘Den Lille Brusfabrikken’ in 1920 and was joined last autumn by two sugar-free varieties, which together broke all records with their supermarket launch,” says CEO Marianne Bergersen.

When founder Martin Bergersen started soda production in 1920, the factory was located in his home in the centre of Lillestrøm. Most production was done by hand. Today, the factory occupies

a 8,000 m<sup>2</sup> site in a central location in Lillestrøm and in 2020 produced nearly 3.5 million litres of soda on a state-of-the-art bottling line.

“There is still a lot of craft involved in turning good ingredients into refreshing soda and juice,” Marianne Bergersen explains.

### Back in family ownership

Oskar Sylte Mineralvannfabrikk in Molde is also approaching its centenary. Oskar Sylte started a commission business at the age of 20 in 1927, and in 1929 he set up factory production of soda.

“No one in my family knows why grandfather went into soda. He set up Solo in 1934 together with Ringnes. We still own Solo together with Ringnes and produce all Solo soda in Møre and Romsdal,” says CEO Oskar Dag Sylte jr.

Oskar Sylte was 100% family owned when it was founded. Ringnes came in on the ownership side in 1990, and for many years Oskar Sylte bottled Ringnes soda for Northwest Norway. The soft drinks factory has been back in the sole ownership of the Sylte family since 2014, and production for Ringnes ceased in 2016. Last year it bottled around 5 million litres of its own products.

### Nationwide

“When we separated from Ringnes, a good part of our production volume disappeared. Finding ourselves at a crossroads, we decided to discontinue distribution and go the wholesaler route. At around the same time, we switched to recyclable packaging. As a result, our products went from being available mainly in Møre and Romsdal to being sold nationwide. In 2020, we made it onto the shelves of all Coop stores, and our products are now available from Coop and Bunnpris throughout Norway. We have been growing gradually since the

reorganisation in 2016. We are gaining momentum slowly and building brick by brick,” Sylte explains.

Roma Mineralvann’s core market has traditionally been the central part of East Norway, with Romerike as its ‘beating heart’. It began working with several national wholesalers in 2014.



“The biggest change for us in recent times was in logistics and technology when we switched from reusable to recyclable bottles. The factory had to make large investments in order to keep up with development. At the same time, we have reached many more customers all over Norway,” says Marianne Bergersen.

### Reducing plastic volume

Work on sustainability has also become increasingly important at both soft drinks factories.

“Sustainability means thinking carefully about the consequences of the choices we make in product development and operation. We kicked off 2020 by cutting

60 tonnes of carbon with a change to how the building was heated. Plastic reduction and the use of recycled material in our bottles is discussed on a regular basis, and the factory made large strides in this direction in the course of last year. We increased the recycled content of our bottles by 25 percent and achieved a plastic reduction of 10-20 percent per bottle,” says Marianne Bergersen.

“We have always focused on waste sorting and recycling. Now we are also working actively to reduce our plastic consumption, and we have signed up to the Plastics Pledge,” says Oskar Dag Sylte jr.

### Shared challenges

As small regional soft drinks factories, Oskar Sylte and Roma have the same advantages and challenges to a large extent.

“The greatest advantages lie in being able to change direction quickly because we have short decision lines. A key challenge is breaking into the market, which takes longer when you are small,” says Oskar Dag Sylte jr.

Marianne Bergersen at Roma points out that the biggest advantages of being small are being able to make changes quickly and the generalist expertise you build up as a team.

“One of the biggest challenges is that our competitors’ market power controls the majority of market activity, and that the world and official regulations in some areas move so quickly that it can be difficult to keep up. Industry associations and multilateral cooperation are vital for us in this respect,” says Marianne Bergersen of Roma Mineralvannfabrikk.

*“When the local population were unable to buy drinks in Sweden, sales went up, which meant more returns too, of course.”*

*Geir Nilsen, Rema 1000 franchisee*

## Is the ‘Norwegian business’ here to stay?

Franchisee Geir Nilsen of Rema 1000 Ranenget in Mo i Rana was among the many people who noticed an increase in both sales and returns as a result of border closures in 2020.

Geir Nilsen’s store collected 2,806,406 cans and bottles last year, 18 percent up on 2019. This is by far the highest figure in the County of Nordland and fifth highest in Norway as a whole.

“We are close to the Swedish border, which had a major impact on drinks sales. When the local population were unable to buy drinks in Sweden, sales went up, which meant more returns too, of course,” says Nilsen.

### Measures to keep drinks sales

He expects a gradual decline in returns as we more or less get back to normal, but does not think we will go back to how things were before the coronavirus pandemic.

“For the people who liked to pop over to Sweden once or twice a month it will be

harder now, even when the restrictions are eased,” says Nilsen.

Beer has also become slightly cheaper in Norway, and the return rates went up a couple of years ago. According to the franchisee, these are measures that could help to retain some of the drinks sales when the borders reopen.

“We also need to make sure that we have the products that customers want,” he says.

### More bulk buying

In addition to the decline in border trade, he has also noticed another change in shopping patterns, especially for one group of customers.

“I have noticed that more customers, and older people in particular, who used to come in several times a week for small shops, are now combining those shops

and buying in bulk. I think this is a permanent change in shopping patterns,” says Geir Nilsen.

It remains to be seen what Norwegian shopping and return habits will be like when we escape from Covid-19 restrictions and get back the freedom we have been desperately longing for. “Climate and the environment are getting a lot of attention and I think the focus on returning empties will remain, even though the pandemic is in the spotlight right now. A strong commitment to returning empties is a very good thing, as we need to take environmental challenges seriously,” says Geir Nilsen.





# Kolonial offers Covid-friendly returns collection

Kolonial experienced rapid growth in 2020, the year of Covid-19, but faced challenges with its scheme to collect returns from people's homes. They found a good solution at the end of 2020.



Kolonial is Norway's largest online grocery retailer and delivers groceries to both private individuals and businesses. Not everyone is aware, however, that Kolonial also offers to collect returns from customers when making deliveries. "There is a bit of a wow factor for customers when they realise that we take their empties," says Louise Fuchs, Communications Director at Kolonial.

Since starting to accept returns in 2016, Kolonial has become one of the biggest actors and in 2020 it collected nearly 3.3 million bottles and cans. The empties are collected in plastic bags, which are scanned on delivery. The money is then credited to the customer's account.

"I think it is a really good scheme. A sack that does not leak makes it simple and handy. It is great that they take empties away when they deliver your shopping," says Heidi Neilson. She and her husband have been using the deposit return scheme for a while.

## An important actor in food preparedness

Then Covid-19 hit and Louise Fuchs speaks of a year that was different for them too. "The heat was on during Covid-19 and the company grew rapidly," she says. With Covid-19 restrictions, self-isolating and unwillingness to go into shops, many people made use of home delivery services.

Kolonial has gone from being a simple and convenient way to do your weekly shop on a busy workday to becoming an important actor in food preparedness and part of critical infrastructure.

Although home delivery in itself limits contact with other people, Kolonial nevertheless implemented many infection control measures to reduce interfaces at the point of delivery. When the first wave hit in March of last year, Kolonial suspended their returns collection scheme and at the same time started delivering to the doorstep.

"I think the arrangement worked well during the coronavirus pandemic. The delivery people are helpful and very service-minded. A lot of able people deliver to and collect from us, and they stand well back from the door. It is great that Kolonial is expanding its services so that there is no need to go to the store just to return empties," says Heidi.

## Covid-friendly deposit return scheme

"We found that people were very understanding during the pandemic, even though our customers like the practicality of us taking their empties away," says Fuchs.

"We restarted the deposit return scheme at the end of June last year, but unfortunately had to suspend it temporarily when the second big wave happened in mid-November. This was challenging for us and our customers alike, and we were finally able to launch a Covid-friendly scheme in mid-December," she goes on.

The measures include having to put the bag of returns on the doorstep before delivery, and customers must wait to return their empties if they have symptoms of illness.

## A lot of love and support

Louise Fuchs says that it was touching to feel the support they got from customers, and to see how employees steered themselves and tackled the situation head on.

"I am very proud of how we handled last year, and I think all our employees are too. At our warehouse in Lørenskog, we had an enormous screen showing feedback from our customers, and there was so much love. We received lots of lovely supportive messages and great understanding for the measures we had to put in place in order to deliver food safely," she concludes.

# Reverse vending machine challenger grows in Norway

Every day, 4,470,000 bottles and cans go through the reverse vending machines in Norwegian stores, and 250 sacks are filled in the back every hour. "Our job is to produce good solutions that make returns go as efficiently as possible," says Gudmund Larsen of RVM Systems.

There are around 3,700 reverse vending machines supplied by either Tomra or RVM Systems in Norwegian stores.

"The reverse vending machine is not sexy, either for customers or the franchisee. It is just something that has to work efficiently, without stopping," says Gudmund Larsen, Managing Director of RVM Systems.

Reverse vending machine challenger RVM Systems made its mark in the Norwegian grocery sector in the past year. The company installed around 100 new machines and will soon have 500 reverse vending machines in Norwegian stores.

"We saw a 60 percent increase last year, partly as a result of now having a contract with all the chains and machines installed in all chain formats. 2021 is going to be very exciting," says Larsen.

## 'Mixing' in store

He says that the company has been on an exciting journey in recent years.

"We have introduced 'mix' in collaboration with Infinitem. This means that we crush cans and bottles together

inside the machine, so you just need a single shared crusher instead of one for bottles and one for cans.

"This reduces the investment cost by 30 percent, in addition to which it frees up around 2.5 square metres, which you can use for something else," Larsen explains.

RVM Systems is focusing on making the deposit return system efficient and as user-friendly as possible for staff and customers alike.

## Primary school experiment

Infinitem was a driving force behind the 'mix' system, which means that the bags hold slightly more than if the plastic and aluminium were separated.

"Think back to the experiment you did in primary school where you had a glass full of peas. Even if it looked full, there was still space when you poured salt in. It is just the same with plastic bottles and cans. The cans are smaller than the plastic bottles when crushed and fill the empty spaces between the crushed bottles like the salt. That gives us better capacity utilisation in the bags," says Larsen.

He estimates that around 5 percent of the logistics costs for everything that is returned can be saved in this way. "Although this figure is not very large in itself, it adds up when you consider the total volume of bottles and cans returned in Norway every year."

## Important role model

"Infinitem influences and helps other countries to become good at deposit return. We are doing what we can to learn from Infinitem and contribute to development in making the deposit return system as efficient as possible. Efficient systems are vital if new countries are to decide to introduce a deposit return scheme," says Larsen.

"RVM Systems is a Scandinavian company that develops, installs and maintains deposit return systems, and is growing rapidly internationally. Our partners in several countries are now following suit, including Scotland, which is introducing a deposit return system based on Infinitem's solution, where cans and plastic bottles are mixed in the same containers," Larsen concludes.

"We are doing what we can to learn from Infinitem and contribute to development in making the deposit return system as efficient as possible."

Gudmund Larsen,  
Managing Director of RVM Systems





# Pandemic fails to stop international deposit return dream

**Closed borders have made physical visits to Infinitem's facility difficult, but a large number of international meetings have been held all the same – virtually. "It is great to see all the engagement," says Kjell Olav Maldum, Managing Director of Infinitem**

Prior to lockdown in March 2020, Infinitem received a visit from South Korea. They are working to expand the deposit return system, which is just for glass bottles, to include plastic bottles and metal cans as well.

## Teaching the whole world

"We have a good system that many countries want to copy. There are various challenges that mean it is not equally simple to have similar systems elsewhere, but we want to show what it takes to get going," says Kjell Olav Maldum.

Portugal, the Netherlands, Singapore and England are among the countries that had virtual meetings with Infinitem in 2020.

## Wanting to inspire change

"Although not being able to show visitors around our facility is strange, we feel we

have had some very good conversations that hopefully inspired people," says Maldum.

In addition to meetings with countries, international companies and organisations are also interested in learning about the deposit return scheme in Norway. The model is also transferable to products other than bottles and cans.

In 2020, Infinitem gave talks to Danone, Deloitte Australia and the European Association of Plastics Recycling & Recovery Organisations (EPRO), among others.

"We are delighted to have packed so much into 2020 despite the circumstances, but look forward to welcoming visitors in person again, and continuing to learn and teach," says Kjell Olav Maldum.

# “We recycle people!”

**The Salvation Army helps to recycle plastic bottles and cans by collecting empties from workplaces. The deposits it receives are used for activities that ‘recycle’ people.**

The Salvation Army’s involvement in Infinitem’s corporate deposit return scheme is in its early stages, but expectations are high.

“We have had very good experiences collecting empties in Lillehammer, where we made around NOK 50,000 in six months. These experiences have motivated us and mean that returning empties is a revenue option that we want to explore in more places,” says Frode Woldsund, Regional Manager of the Salvation Army’s substance abuse services

The region for which he is responsible covers large parts of East Norway and Southern Norway as far north as Stavanger. The Salvation Army is going to set up 25 containers for collecting deposit bottles and cans in this area.

“We will spend the money we make from this on our activities. This means that the deposit money will be turned into street football, sailing and cycling, and into offerings like music workshops and beekeeping,” Woldsund explains.

## Set up in business premises

“You know, Infinitem recycles bottles and cans, while we recycle people,” he adds.

He praises Infinitem for the values it stands for, and talks enthusiastically about the importance of looking after and reusing both material and human resources. Woldsund also stresses that Infinitem is a valuable partner.

“The Salvation Army would not have got this targeted focus on deposit return as a source of revenue up and running had it not been for the well-established system we encountered when we started out,” he says.

The northern part of the country is also covered by the organisation’s new venture.

“The northern region is focusing on deposit return to the same degree as the southern region, for which I am responsible. We are using the same solution everywhere, with Infinitem bins that we set up in business premises and other places where we are allowed,” he says.

In Oslo, for example, the Erik Arnesen car dealership chain is going to be an important partner for the Salvation Army. “Us setting up our bins there means that they get rid of what they perceive as a problem: empties piling up on the

premises. When the bins are full, we use our own messenger service, ‘De ti bud’, to collect the sacks and send them to Infinitem,” Woldsund goes on.

## Using our own resources

“In addition to the messengers who come to collect the sacks of empties as they fill up, our printers in Stavanger have the task of printing the material to go with the venture. It is important that we are careful to use our own resources where we can,” says Woldsund.

He is now hoping that more firms will join in and help, so that cans, plastic bottles and people can continue to be recycled in years to come. The Salvation Army needs good locations in which to set up their collection bins.

“We are dependent on support in our work. If a lot of empties accumulate at your workplace and you have trouble getting rid of them, just get in touch!”







# “Plastic deposit bottles are an eco winner”

Lightweight packaging is the key to Vinmonopolet cutting its carbon emissions and plastic deposit bottles are a good solution. “We also need to work towards a high percentage of recycled material being used in the plastic bottles,” says Environment Manager Rolf Eriksen.

Vinmonopolet, Norway’s state-owned alcohol retailer, intends to cut its carbon emissions by 40 percent by 2030. Analyses carried out in 2016 show that most of Vinmonopolet’s climate footprint comes from the packaging on their products.

“Packaging is still our main focus. For the grocery sector, packaging accounts for 5 percent of climate footprint, whereas in our case we are talking about 40 percent. The packaging on our products needs to be lighter, which is happening in two ways. The weight of our glass bottles has to be reduced and more products have to be switched to lighter packaging, such as plastic bottles. We therefore ask for lightweight packaging on all products costing less than NOK 150 that we source,” Rolf Eriksen, Environment Manager at Vinmonopolet, explains.

## “A clear eco winner”

In 2019, Vinmonopolet introduced stricter environmental requirements for its suppliers. One of the requirements is that all new plastic bottles and aluminium cans in the standard assortment must have a deposit.

“To begin with, our suppliers had lots of questions and not all the plastic bottle producers in Europe could meet our requirements. They have now learned more and put what is needed in place. As a result, we are seeing more suppliers also choosing plastic deposit bottles for products in the order-only assortment, where it is not a requirement,” says Eriksen.

According to a packaging study carried out by Vinmonopolet in collaboration with the other Nordic alcohol monopolies in 2018, wine in standard weight glass bottles generates 675 grams of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalents per litre in emissions. As the deposit return systems in the different countries are not identical, the Nordic study did not allow for the effect of plastic bottles being part of the deposit return system. Vinmonopolet has carried out similar calculations for 75 cl plastic deposit bottles in collaboration with Infinitum and they show 63 grams of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalents per litre in emissions.

“Plastic deposit bottles are a clear eco winner and switching as many products as possible to plastic bottles that are part of the

deposit return system has a huge impact,” says Vinmonopolet’s Environment Manager.

## ‘The little magic mark’

Using recycled plastic material in new plastic bottles also has an important environmental impact.

“To begin with, we focused on reducing the weight of packaging by switching more products to lighter glass or plastic packaging. The next step is working to have a high percentage of recycled material in plastic bottles. But recycled material has to be available on the market if we are going to ask for it. And, paradoxically, recycled plastic is more expensive than virgin plastic,” says Eriksen.

“We can see that our customers are very concerned about the environment and that the DRS label is ‘the little magic mark’. When customers see the DRS label, they believe the product is part of a circular system, whereas plastic bottles without the label make many people think of plastic in the ocean. In 2021, we need to get even better at making clear on the shelves that products have a deposit,” says Eriksen.

# A circular deposit return system

For us Norwegians, the deposit return system is a given. For specialists from all over the world, it is brilliant and remarkable.

Climate, recycling and plastic in the world's oceans are attracting increasing attention around the globe. Huge quantities of drinks packaging are part of the problem, and retail, industry and authorities are looking for solutions. The best solution they have found is in Norway. No other country is quite as good at collecting and recycling cans and bottles. The key to this success is eco-thinking and efficiency in every link of the chain, and thinking circular.

Once the consumer has treated themselves to something refreshing to drink, they take

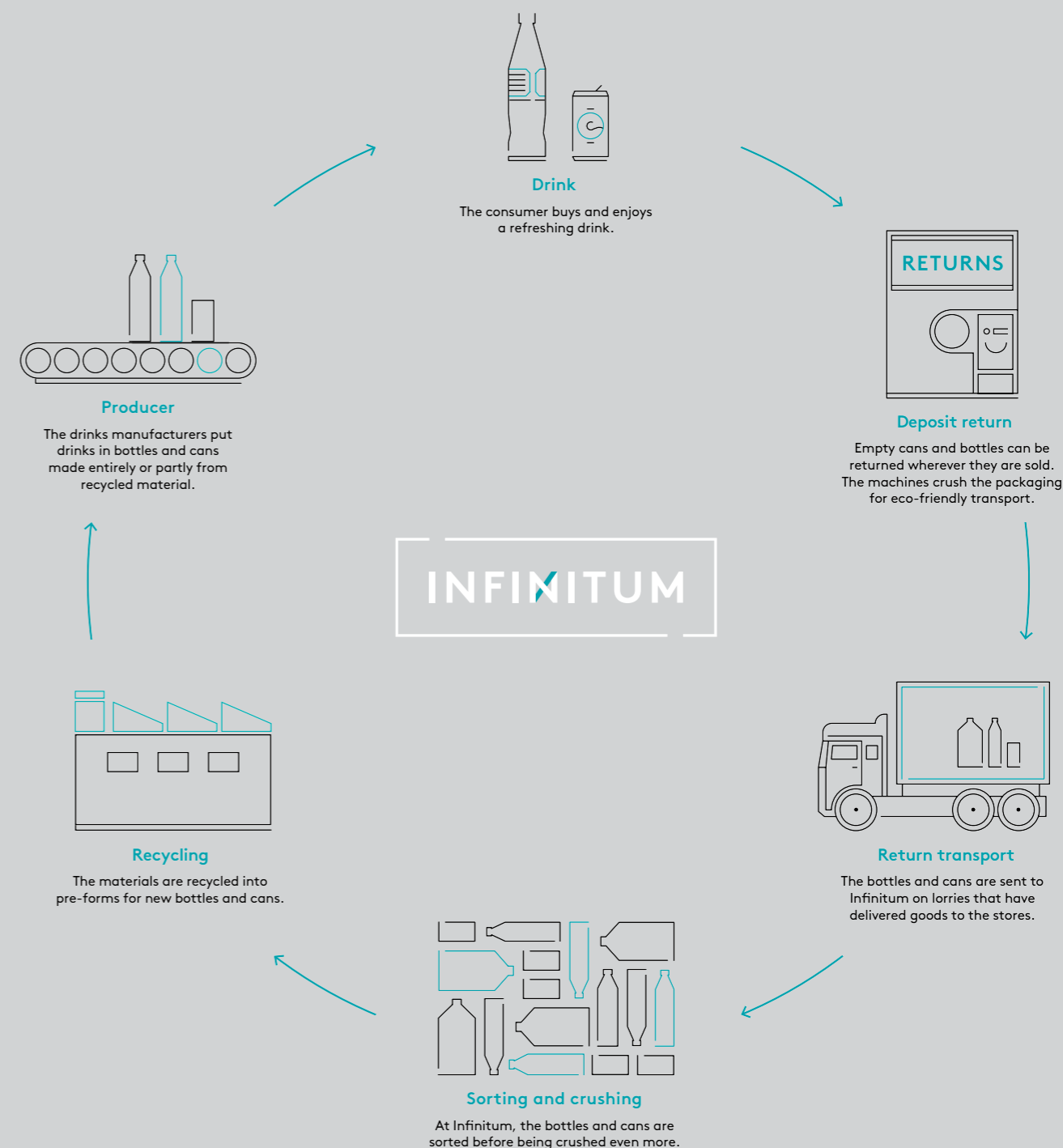
the empty bottle or can back to collect the deposit. They can do this wherever deposit return drinks are sold.

The reverse vending machine crushes cans and bottles so that they take up as little room as possible when transported.

Onward transport from the store uses empty space on the lorries that have delivered goods and are returning to the wholesaler's warehouse. The empties are sent on from the wholesaler to Infinitem's sorting facility.

Sorting is done at Infinitem's three facilities in Bjerkvik, Trondheim and Fetsund. Plastic and aluminium are separated before being crushed further for volume-efficient transport for recycling.

The materials are recycled into pre-forms for new bottles and cans. At the drinks manufacturer, they are filled with another drink and land back on the shelf in store until someone is thirsty again. And so the cycle continues, from bottle to bottle and can to can.



# The deposit return story

**2020 was a different year with record deposit return figures. Norway's deposit return scheme for reusable bottles was set up in the early 1900s. When, in the 1980s, retailers wanted recyclable disposable packaging that could be crushed before being returned, it became the start of the present deposit return scheme. Jan Tore Sanner, the current Minister of Finance, returned the very first bottle for recycling in 1999.**

**1995:**  
The DRS is approved by the Norwegian Pollution Control Authority, now the Norwegian Environment Agency.

**1996:**  
Norsk Resirk is founded with retailers and industry as equal shareholders through their industry associations.

**1999:**  
**Norsk Resirk's deposit return system for drinks cans and bottles is set up. The system is open to all. The first can is returned through the system on 3 May 1999.**

**2000:**  
The first recyclable bottles are registered in the DRS. Norsk Resirk opens its own facility at Alnabru in Oslo.

**2003:**  
In what is just the fifth year of operation for the company, 92 percent of all cans and 77 percent of all drinks bottles are collected through the DRS.

**2004:**  
Norsk Resirk has another successful year with an increase in the number of both drinks cans and recyclable plastic bottles collected, leading to a reduction in the environmental levy of 93 percent on cans and 80 percent on PET.

**2006:**  
A production facility opens in Bjerkvik to serve North Norway.



In 1999 the now Minister of Finance Jan Tore Sanner returned the very first can to Norsk Resirk's new return scheme for bottles and cans. Then chairman Øyvind Winther and Managing Director Jarle Grytli were also present.

**2007:**  
Kjell Olav Maldum takes over from Jarle Grytli as Managing Director.

**2008:**  
TINE, Norway's largest producer, distributor and exporter of dairy products, launches drinks bottles for the first time in 40 years. The decision to use bottles is down to the DRS.

**2009:**  
The Norwegian Climate and Pollution Agency gives its approval for DRS-labelled bottles and cans used in waste-to-energy recovery to count towards Infinitem's collection rates as well. The share of these drink containers accounts for around 4 percent of the overall collection rate for cans and around 8 percent for bottles.

**2011:**  
The environmental levy on bottles is removed because the collection rate has exceeded 95 percent of packaging sold.

Small importers are invited to join the DRS.

**2012:**  
The environmental levy on cans is removed because the verified return rate has exceeded 95 percent of packaging sold.

Mack Bryggerier, Ringnes and Coca Cola Enterprises switch from refillable bottles to recyclable PET. The other drinks manufacturers follow suit.

A new production facility opens in Heimdal, just outside Trondheim, to serve Central Norway.

**2013:**  
A new production facility opens in Heia in Fetsund to serve Southern Norway. A new production facility opens in Bjerkvik to serve North Norway.

**2014:**  
Norsk Resirk changes its name to Infinitem. The name and logo are inspired by the infinite number of times bottles and cans can be recycled in the DRS.

**2017:**  
Producers worldwide change their mind and take a positive view of deposit return systems and their responsibility as producers. Sky News broadcasts a piece on the Norwegian DRS, generating an influx of visitors from all over the world wanting to learn more about Infinitem's deposit return scheme.

The Ministry of Climate and Environment decides to increase deposit rates from NOK 1 and NOK 2.50 to NOK 2 and NOK 3.

**2018:**  
Infinitem achieves its highest ever collection figures, with 88.6 (95.1) percent of bottles and 87.3 (98.9) percent of cans collected. Vinmonopolet, Norway's state-owned alcohol retailer, launches wine in PET deposit bottles for the first time.

The EU is pushing towards a circular economy and adopts ambitious targets and strict requirements for both collection and material recycling. PET bottles must be made from at least 25 percent recycled plastic by 2025 and 30 percent by 2030.

The collection rate for drinks bottles must be at least 77 percent by 2025 and 90 percent by 2029.

The deposit on bottles and cans is doubled from NOK 1.00 to NOK 2.00, the first increase since 1986. The deposit on bottles and cans larger than 500 ml also increases from NOK 2.00 to NOK 3.00.

**2019:**  
**Infinitem celebrates the 20th anniversary of the current deposit return scheme and achieves a collection rate for both bottles and cans of 90 percent.**

Construction of the recycling plant at Heia in Lillestrøm Municipality begins. Extended producer responsibility becomes an increasingly important element in the EU's efforts to create circular economies for packaging.

**2020:**  
In the year of Covid-19, Infinitem sets a record with a deposit return rate of 92% and more than 1.4 billion cans and bottles for recycling.



Infection control measures made face coverings necessary, as demonstrated by Christian Volden Helverschou and Christer Torne at the Meny CC West supermarket.

# Board of Directors



**Svein Sollie**  
Director  
DMF (Asko Norge AS)



**Hans Petter Fossum-Piene**  
Deputy chairman  
BS (Coca-Cola Enterprise European Partners Norge AS)



**Helge Hasselgård**  
Board member  
DLS (DLF)



**Sven Serck-Hansen**  
Board member  
BS (Ringnes AS)



**Tore Nygaardsmoen**  
Board member  
CNH (Coop Norge Handel AS)



**Benno Graser**  
Board member  
DMF (Rema 1000 Distribusjon AS)

## Deputy board members 2020:

**Jens Olav Flekke**  
DMF (DMF)

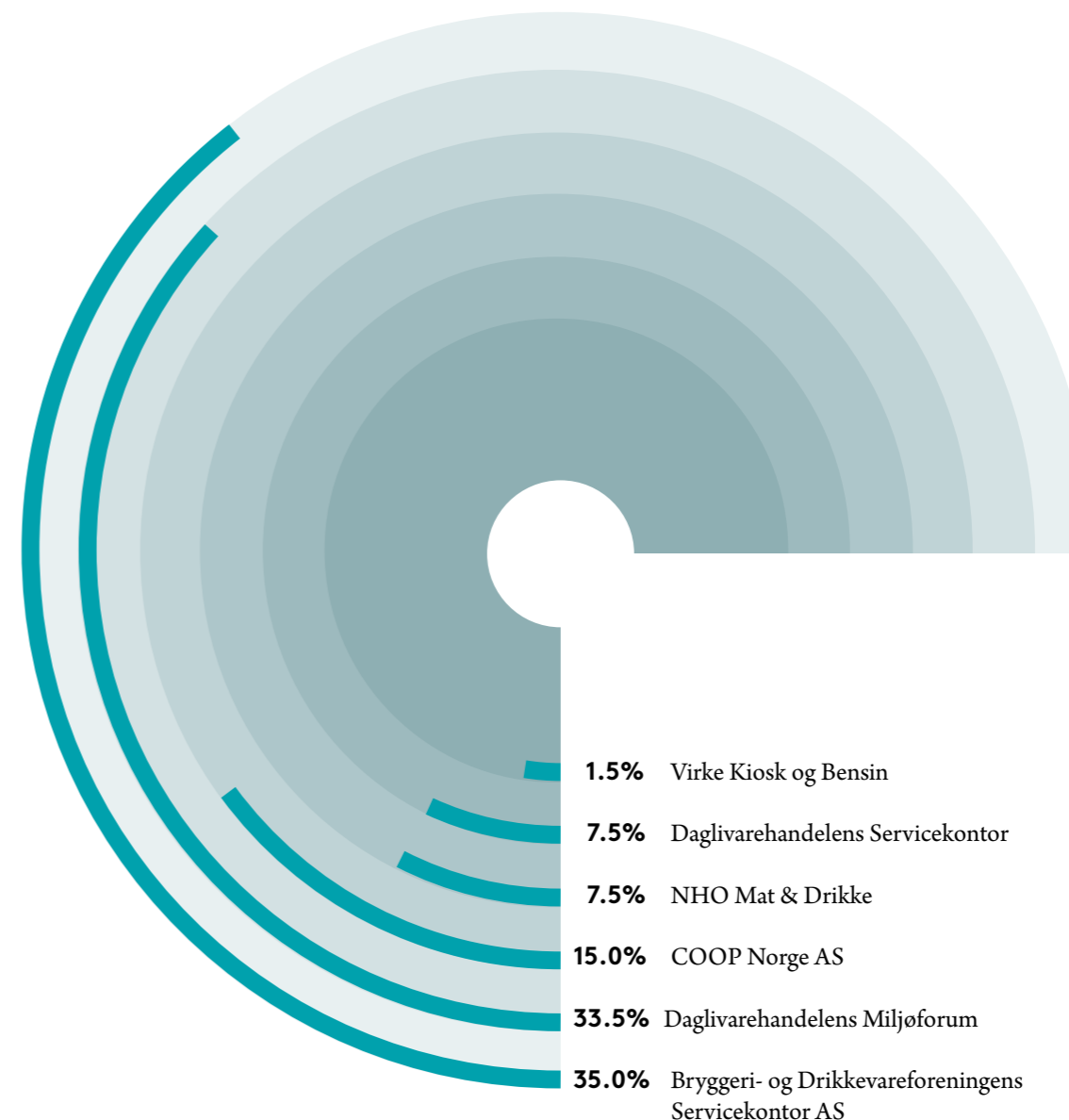
**Torgeir Løftingsmo**  
CNH (CNH)

**Siv Grønning**  
BS (Ringnes AS)

**Christian Aass**  
BS (Aass Bryggerier AS)

**Thomas Weihe**  
DLF (DLF)

# Infinitem's owners



# Statistics for 2020

\*Collection figures for reverse vending machines



**800,887,244**

cans returned\*

**93.3%**

of all cans sold



**585,052,366**

plastic bottles returned\*

**92%**

of all cans sold



**1,385,939,610**

total returns

**11,073**

tonnes of aluminium were returned and recycled by Norsk Hydro

**21,970**

tonnes of plastic were returned and recycled by Veolia and Wellman



# Financial statements

## Infinitum AS - Income statement (figures in NOK 1,000)

Operating revenues and costs	2020	2019
EPR revenues	11,012	40,759
Deposit return revenues	3,471,196	2,934,976
Sale of collected materials	205,176	180,164
Other operating revenues	64,889	45,695
<b>Net operating revenues</b>	<b>3,752,273</b>	<b>3,201,594</b>
Deposit return expenditure	3,290,755	2,682,941
Handling fees	298,240	249,241
Transport costs	142,088	126,091
Other production costs	86,532	74,569
<b>Total operating costs</b>	<b>3,817,614</b>	<b>3,132,842</b>
<b>Profit from operating activities</b>	<b>-65,341</b>	<b>68,752</b>
Admin, marketing and depreciation	67,307	64,704
<b>Operating profit</b>	<b>-132,648</b>	<b>4,048</b>
<b>Net financial items</b>	<b>3,303</b>	<b>5,361</b>
<b>PROFIT AFTER FINANCIAL ITEMS</b>	<b>-129,345</b>	<b>9,409</b>

## Key figures

Supply chain	No. of cans	Tonnes of cans	% of added	No. of PET	Tonnes of PET	% added to the market
Total sales	915,125,716	12,587	-	630,615,766	23,560	0%
Value chain	-55,658,642	-717	-	10,959,081	320	0%
Added (sales + value chain)	859,467,074	11,871	100%	641,574,847	23,880	100%
<b>Total returned through reverse vending machines</b>	<b>800,887,244</b>	<b>11,072</b>	<b>93.3%</b>	<b>585,052,366</b>	<b>21,970</b>	<b>92%</b>
From central sorting plant	4,750,162	65	0.5%	1,481,472	52	0.2%
From slag sorting	33,909,221	464	3.9%	-	-	0.0%
From materials sorted at source	6,718,400	91	0.8%	1,802,752	65	0.3%
Waste-to-energy	8,169,227	112	0.9%	38,206,629	1,246	5.2%
<b>Total recycled from waste</b>	<b>53,547,010</b>	<b>731</b>	<b>6.2%</b>	<b>41,490,853</b>	<b>1,363</b>	<b>5.7%</b>
<b>Total recycled</b>	<b>854,434,254</b>	<b>11,804</b>	<b>99.4%</b>	<b>626,543,219</b>	<b>23,332</b>	<b>97.7%</b>
Incineration waste in bottom ash	12,421,498	170	1.4%	-	-	-
Energy recycling incineration	1,616,984	22	0.2%	6,136,650	196	0.8%
Unknown allocations	-9,005,661	-125	-1.1%	8,894,978	352	1.5%
<b>Total not returned</b>	<b>58,579,830</b>	<b>798</b>	<b>6.7%</b>	<b>56,522,481</b>	<b>1,919</b>	<b>8.0%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>859,467,074</b>	<b>11,871</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>641,574,847</b>	<b>23,889</b>	<b>100%</b>
Foreign items	19,506,476			2,936,471		

\* Materials recycling

\*\* Also represents uncertainties in the analysis

## Balance sheet (figures in NOK 1,000)

Assets	2020	2019
<b>Non-current assets</b>		
<b>Plant and equipment</b>		
Land, buildings and other real property	123,033	115,142
Plant and machinery, equipment, fixtures, etc.	43,919	45,740
<b>Plant and equipment</b>	<b>166,952</b>	<b>160,882</b>
<b>Financial non-current assets</b>		
Net plan assets	473	536
Financial non-current assets	473	536
<b>Total non-current assets</b>	<b>167,425</b>	<b>161,418</b>
<b>Current assets</b>		
<b>Receivables</b>		
Trade receivables	349,018	278,568
Other receivables	12,945	19,014
<b>Total receivables</b>	<b>361,963</b>	<b>297,582</b>
<b>Cash at bank and in hand, etc.</b>	<b>317,767</b>	<b>309,326</b>
<b>Total current assets</b>	<b>679,730</b>	<b>606,908</b>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>847,155</b>	<b>768,326</b>

Equity and assets	2020	2019
<b>Equity</b>		
<b>Contributed equity</b>		
Share capital (200 shares in denominations of NOK 7,500)	1,500	1,500
<b>Total paid-in capital</b>	<b>1,500</b>	<b>1,500</b>
<b>Retained earnings</b>		
Other capital	-77,518	51,828
<b>Total retained earnings</b>	<b>-77,518</b>	<b>51,828</b>
<b>Total equity</b>	<b>-76,018</b>	<b>53,328</b>
<b>Liabilities</b>		
<b>Current liabilities</b>		
Trade payables	188,467	145,951
Unpaid government charges and special taxes	3,356	2,975
Other current liabilities	7,608	8,330
Provision for deposit liability	723,742	557,742
<b>Total current liabilities</b>	<b>923,173</b>	<b>714,998</b>
<b>Total liabilities</b>	<b>923,173</b>	<b>714,998</b>
<b>TOTAL EQUITY AND LIABILITIES</b>	<b>847,155</b>	<b>768,326</b>

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