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Interpack 2026: Industry preps for the Olympics of packaging

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UFlex is actively growing its portfolio of sustainable packaging

In a freewheeling interview, Rahul Kumar discusses with Apoorvshree Chaturvedi of UFlex Group, the company's sustainability and recycling efforts, deployment of AI in the manufacturing setup, and its world-wide capacity

Rahul Kumar (RK): Congratulations on achieving the EcoVadis Silver rating with a group-level score of 72/100. What were the key initiatives that drove this rating?

Apoorvshree Chaturvedi (AC): Over the years, we have strengthened responsible manufacturing, enhanced environmental, social, and governance (ESG) performance, and built a sustainable value chain across our operations. Some of the key initiatives include increasing the use of renewable energy across our operations, taking the renewable energy share to 24% in our India-based operations in FY25. We promote in-house recycling, deploy energy-efficient technologies such as variable frequency drives (VFDs), and operate zero liquid discharge (ZLD) systems across several of our manufacturing plants to enable extensive waste water recycling and reduce freshwater dependency. On the governance and reporting side, we have deployed a digital ESG data management tool across all operations to strengthen accuracy and accountability.

RK: What percentage of UFlex's current film and packaging portfolio incorporates PCR or recyclable design?

AC: We are actively growing our portfolio of sustainable packaging products and solutions, with a focus on innovations that deliver both environmental and commercial value to our customers.

We have developed post-consumer recycled (PCR) films with up to 100% PCR content, helping customers reduce dependence on virgin plastics. We manufacture flexible tubes for the beauty and cosmetics sector that incorporate PCR materials, and aseptic packaging products that include 5% certified recycled polymers. Additionally, we produce food-grade recycled polyethylene terephthalate (rPET) resin to advance sustainable solutions.

We manufacture water-based inks that help lower the environmental footprint of packaging production while enhancing recyclability. Another recent innovation is a film — high seal strength (F-HSS) polyester designed to support the transition toward recyclable packaging. It enables mono-material PET structures while delivering high seal strength, clarity, and reliable machinability for demanding applications.

RK: Your aseptic packaging segment has seen capacity expansion in recent years. How significant is this business in UFlex's long-term revenue mix?

AC: Aseptic packaging is one of our strategic growth drivers. We have expanded our Sanand facility from seven-billion to 12-billion packs annually and are developing a new 12-billion pack plant in Egypt to serve markets across Europe, Africa, and the Middle East. During Q3 FY26, our aseptic packaging volumes grew 2.3% year-on-year to 1.8-billion packs, while nine-month volumes increased 4.4% to 5.9-billion packs.

The aseptic packaging business strengthens our presence in innovation-led segments and enables deeper engagement with customers. Over the

long term, we expect substantial growth contribution from the business.

RK: How is UFlex deploying AI, IoT, predictive maintenance, and real-time analytics across its plants to improve OEE and reduce energy intensity?
AC: We are progressively integrating smart manufacturing technologies to enhance operational efficiency and reduce energy intensity across our plants. These technologies enable better monitoring of machine performance, support predictive maintenance, and help optimise production processes, ultimately improving overall equipment effectiveness (OEE) while lowering resource consumption.

AI-driven technologies are supporting advancements in recycling efficiency. Smart sorting systems can differentiate between plastic films, multi-layer structures, and food-grade versus non-food-grade materials, improving material recovery and reducing contamination. Over time, such technologies have the potential to transform how flexible packaging is manufactured and recycled, supporting both operational excellence and long-term sustainability goals.

RK: Globally, carbon reporting and packaging waste directives are becoming mandatory. How does UFlex ensure compliance across multiple jurisdictions?
AC: We follow a unified sustainability approach, aligning our operations with globally recognised standards. We maintain a consistent, innovation-led approach across markets. Our focus on renewable energy adoption, product innovations, and recyclable packaging solutions helps create scalable solutions that work across jurisdictions. Transparent reporting remains central to our strategy, reflected in our CDP B ratings for climate change and water security and our EcoVadis Silver rating. Through centralised governance and integrated ESG tracking, we translate varied regulations into a cohesive roadmap that supports both compliance and long-term sustainability goals.

RK: India's Plastic Waste Management Rules and EPR norms are tightening. What policy refinements would help accelerate scalable recycling and mono-material adoption?
AC: These evolving government policy measures are creating strong positive momentum for advancing scalable recycling and accelerating the adoption of sustainable packaging solutions. As the ecosystem evolves, continued collaboration among policymakers, industry, and brand owners will be crucial to address ▸

CRICKET EDITION - RAPID FIRE

Okay. Virat Kohli's aggression or Rahul Dravid's patience?
Virat Kohli's aggression.

Powerplay strategy or death-over mastery?
Power play strategy.

Captain Cool (Dhoni) or aggressive leader (Ganguly)?
Cool Dhoni.

Chasing a target or defending a total?
I'd say, defending the total.

One innovation rule change you'd introduce in cricket?
I think they should use the same ball for 50 overs for ODI because changing every 25 is making it too friendly for the batsmen. When the ball gets soft, it's harder to hit. A lot of people have the same thinking. Cricket is becoming a little bit too batsmen-friendly.

IPL pressure or World Cup knockout?
World Cup knockout.

Fast bowlers or mystery spinners?
Fast bowlers.

Data analytics in cricket — overrated or game-changing?
Overrated.

If UFlex were a cricket team, which role would you play — captain, strategist, finisher, or all-rounder?
Probably strategist.

Apoorvshree ▸ Chaturvedi, director, global operations of UFlex Group

practical challenges while building on the progress already achieved.

One of the key priorities is to strengthen awareness across the entire value chain. Many brands are still navigating how to incorporate recycled content into recyclable structures, particularly for food-contact applications. Enhanced collaboration and alignment among stakeholders can help accelerate adoption.

At the same time, companies are increasingly moving toward sustainable packaging materials that are easier to recycle and align well with circular economy goals. Supportive policy mechanisms that recognise compliant structures or encourage innovation can enable this transition.

Overall, consistent implementation of EPR guidelines, supported by transparent monitoring and industry participation, will be key to creating a balanced ecosystem.

NAVIGATING GEOPOLITICAL UNCERTAINTY AND TRADE DYNAMICS

The impact of global uncertainties have remained relatively limited compared to peers, supported by our established manufacturing presence across multiple geographies, including the United States. While a few business lines experienced temporary disruptions, these have largely normalised, enabling us to remain better positioned amid global uncertainties.

At the same time, broader market sentiment reflected a degree of caution, with tariff-related uncertainties leading to a mild dampening of global business activity. This was evident in inventory corrections and reduced procurement, particularly in the United States, where import volumes saw a notable decline as customers deferred ordering decisions until greater clarity emerged. Additionally, tariff dynamics influenced currency movements, with a stronger Euro and relatively weaker US Dollar creating cost advantages for certain exporters and intensifying competitive pressures in select markets.

Despite these challenges, we responded proactively by leveraging our balanced geographic presence and flexible supply chain, ensuring continuity of operations and minimal disruption to customers. We remain well-positioned to adapt to shifting trade dynamics, currency fluctuations, and regional uncertainties through our localised manufacturing capabilities and diversified global footprint.

RK: Looking toward 2030, what capital allocation priorities will define UFlex's next growth phase?

AC: Currently, our priorities are centred on the expansion projects already underway, with a focus on value-added products, sustainability, and strengthening our global footprint. This includes the new aseptic packaging plant in Egypt, the upcoming WPP bags facility in Mexico, new recycling facilities being established in Noida, and the proposed BOPP film line in Dharwad, .

Across the organisation, every business unit is focused on growth. Smaller business units are targeting to at least double their size over the next few years, and for the larger business units, sustained growth continues to remain the primary objective.

RK: The global flexible packaging market is projected to cross USD 400-billion within the next decade. Where does UFlex see itself in this growth trajectory, particularly in high-barrier and sustainable segments?

AC: We are well positioned to capture this growth, given our strong capabilities across films, laminates, and recycling. If there is strong demand for sustainable laminates, we are well placed to execute it. We also understand which materials within the sustainable film portfolio can deliver effective barrier properties and which cannot.

PCR polyester has a global presence. I would say it is stronger in the US and in India, but not in Europe. Europe is more bullish on PCR BOPP and PCR CPP films, which are different products where you buy resin from your supplier.

In polyester, one of the advantages is that you can trace it, as it comes from a bottle. You can show it to your customer. There is traceability.

We are bullish about sustainable packaging and performance. But we want to invest in something that is realistic and has a market.

Indian brand owners are moving gradually because they understand that if they approach suppliers for PCR polyester film, it may lead to an increase in costs. They are therefore taking a measured

UFlex is prioritising global expansion, sustainable recycling, and new aseptic facilities

Chaturvedi: Our priorities are centred on the expansion projects already underway

PHOTOGRAPHY EDITION - RAPID FIRE

Sunrise shot or golden hour sunset?
Golden hour sunset.

DSLR or mirrorless?
Mirrorless.

Landscape or street photography?
Street.

Black & white or vibrant colours?
Black and white.

Planned composition or candid spontaneity?
Candid spontaneous.

Tripod precision or handheld instinct?
Handheld instinct.

RAW editing marathon or perfect shot in-camera?
Shot in camera.

Wildlife patience or urban chaos?
Urban chaos.

One lens for life — prime or zoom?
Prime.

If business were a photograph, would it be long exposure, macro detail, or wide-angle vision?
Long exposure.

approach, allowing the industry to invest and scale up so that prices become more competitive over time. At the same time, there will be no shortage of PCR available within India. But there will be no shortage of PCR available within India. Because of the government regulation, people have to act on it, and then the market gets created. Whoever invests in good capacity that is efficient and economic will gain market share. Whoever has an older plant may be able to produce PCR resin, but it might not be as competitive.

RK: With operating in over 140 countries, which regions are currently contributing the strongest growth and how are regional regulations shaping product development?

AC: I would say the US, Europe and the Middle East. These units are well placed because they are comfortable in terms of energy. Even Europe is more or less comfortable in energy now. The cost is still higher compared to what it was before the war between Ukraine and Russia. Outside of India, our structures are pretty homogenous. We have business heads in each location. Those business heads are responsible for the profitability of each location. They have been given a lot of freedom and authority, as per the Indian corporate standards, to run the show. They are answering directly to the board, and the board is responsible to the shareholders.

RK: Is the film market overcrowded?

AC: In India, it is definitely overcrowded. People see this as a good business because they see our performance and some of our key competitors' performance. There is surplus capacity based on what the market demand is. And it will take time to get absorbed because last year the monsoon was too strong, so the FMCG demand didn't rise. The year before that too, the FMCG industry did not have a great year. If you look at FMCG companies, they increased their prices a lot after Covid, because their input prices went up significantly. And now globally, there is pressure on all FMCG and CPG companies to reduce prices because they have basically expanded their margins as much as they could. So, now they will do ▸

UFlex has built one of the packaging sector's most advanced recycling ecosystems globally, integrating sustainability across design, production, and waste management. In alignment with the government of India's extended producer responsibility (EPR) framework, we have two new recycling plants nearing commissioning in Noida, equipped with food and drug administration (FDA)-approved recycling processes to boost the production of rPET, recycled polypropylene (rPP), and recycled polyethylene (rPE) materials for use in food packaging

CHATURVEDI'S MARKET APPROACH

We have meaningful capacities located in different parts of the world. We have mature teams. Our model is different from others in the sense that, since we are present in local markets, we are always looking to sell directly to customers.

We don't work that much with traders and distributors, except in certain markets where required. Otherwise, it is largely direct sales. The advantage is that you know exactly what is happening in the market, but the disadvantage is that there is no one in the channel to help boost your sales.

it selectively because they have gotten used to this higher financial performance. Having said that, in India, if you look at FMCG demand, urban cities are performing well. FMCG will grow in India, and packaging demand will grow because, today, if you look at the per capita consumption, it is low. I think consolidation will not happen soon.

RK: UFlex has invested in recycling infrastructure under initiatives such as Project Plastic Fix. How much recycling capacity has been created, and how does it integrate into your circular economy model?

AC: We are not explicitly pursuing a circular economy approach. Instead, our focus is on demonstrating our ability to produce and supply products with a defined percentage of recycled content, irrespective of the application. Whether the material is used in laminates, the pharmaceutical sector, or other applications, we have the capability to deliver. Even in the aseptic segment, we have demonstrated our ability to incorporate recycled content into aseptic laminates.

The idea is to demonstrate that the products that we produce do not contribute to plastic pollution or plastic waste. They are designed to re-enter the value chain, ensuring that once recycled, they can be used again in packaging applications. The focus is on enabling the collection, washing, sorting, and recycling of materials so they can be used to create various plastic products or, in some cases, be converted back into packaging. Post-consumer recycled (PCR) products, such as bottles can be collected, cleaned, processed into flakes, and converted into resin, which can then be used again in flexible packaging.

In the case of multi-layer plastics, when recycled into resin, such as in our operations in Poland, the material may not always be suitable for returning to flexible packaging. Instead, it can be used in injection moulding to create other plastic products. While this may not represent a fully circular packaging loop, it ensures that the material is recycled and does not contribute to littering or environmental degradation. The objective is to maximise the utilisation of recycled materials while demonstrating that plastic, when effectively collected and recycled, does not contribute to pollution. This remains the primary goal.■