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Carlsberg Rolls Out Rounded Beer Packs

The cardboard design is meant to boost shelf appeal, cut material use and reduce emissions

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Carlsberg has begun rolling out a new cardboard beer multipack with rounded corners that the company says can improve shelf visibility, reduce packaging material and lower emissions, in a project developed with DS Smith and KHS and based on patented Arcwise technology from SCA.

The package, called DS Smith Round Wrap, was designed for bottled beer and is meant to do three things at once: strengthen brand presence, improve the look of the pack and stand out better in stores. The companies said the rounded shape is supported by consumer research showing that people tend to find curved objects more attractive than those with sharp edges. Carlsberg said that matters because shoppers often make decisions quickly at the point of sale.

Marine Andre, Carlsberg’s director of packaging innovation, said the company sees consumer experience as a top priority. “At retail, we have less than two seconds for our products to be noticed on the shelf,” she said in a statement shared by the company. “If you do not attract attention there, you do not exist.” She added that sustainability alone does not persuade shoppers to pay more, which is why packaging must also be functional and help the brand stand out.

The project took several years to move from testing to store shelves. Bogdan Volkotrub, senior manager for packaging implementation and optimization at Carlsberg, said trials began in Sweden in 2020. Early attempts did not produce consistent quality, he said, until the right partners came together in 2022. DS Smith supplied the cardboard material and worked through repeated testing with KHS, which examined whether existing packing machines could handle the new format without major changes.

The first commercial launch took place in Poland, where Carlsberg bottles are commonly sold in large packs of 20 or 24 units. The company already used wraparound cardboard packs there, and a KHS Innopack Kisters WP Advanced machine at the plant could be adapted for the new design. The first rounded-corner packs reached Polish supermarket shelves in 2024.

Jonathan Carter, DS Smith’s director of innovation and product, said the rounded corners required careful balancing of materials. The outer layer had to be strong enough to hold the curve, while the inner layer had to be lighter so the corrugation could form properly. DS Smith tested many combinations of paper grades, flute types, adhesives and machine settings before sending material to Carlsberg and KHS for final trials.

Tobias Kersten, a packaging expert at KHS, said the technical changes were smaller than many expected. “When we first heard about a wraparound pack with rounded corners, many people wondered how it could work,” he said. In practice, he said, only minor adjustments were needed in the folding area, mainly different guiding elements and folding tools. KHS said its systems could be set up precisely enough to integrate the new format into existing wraparound packers without major loss of output.

The companies said the finished pack has been well received by retailers and consumers. Rounded edges are less likely to be damaged during transport, storage and display. DS Smith also cited a consumer study showing that 77% of respondents said they would be more likely to buy a product with the improved Rounded-Wrap design than with other packaging formats.

The design also creates more room for branding. The cardboard top can carry printed advertising and can be opened for single-bottle sales or used as a small display unit when placed upright.

On sustainability, DS Smith said the pack uses up to 20% less material thanks to a lighter inner liner and an optimized die-cut design. Carter said emissions can fall by as much as around 24% depending on the comparison used. Carlsberg Poland estimates annual savings of about 224 metric tons of CO2e. The companies also pointed to logistical benefits such as more stable pallets and less stretch film use.

DS Smith Round Wrap is now ready for wider use across other markets. Carter said production has already been tested successfully at several key sites across EMEA, and that the next step is scaling up with partners. Carlsberg said it expects selective expansion where market volume, brand strategy, material supply and machinery all align.