

From home brew to drinking at home

The glass packaging industry in the USA continues to show both promise and difficulties as 2021 begins. Amid the continuing trend of beer packaging moving from glass bottles to aluminium cans, Richard McDonough reports on segments of the industry that have been impacted by the Covid-19 coronavirus pandemic and examines the potential for increased recycling of glass packaging.

Glass packaging is an important segment of the glass industry in the USA. Businesses utilise glass containers to package a wide variety of items, from food and beverage products to cosmetics and pharmaceuticals. Based on the most recent statistics, the workforce in this segment of the glass industry has steadily decreased in the past 15 years in the USA. Those same statistics show that the value of shipments by glass container manufacturing firms has also decreased.

According to the United States Census Bureau, 13,213 people worked in glass container manufacturing in the country in 2018 (the most recent year for this report). This statistic highlights a continued decrease in the number of workers in this segment of the glass industry. In 2006, 14,193 individuals worked in glass container manufacturing; in 2010, 13,834; and in 2016, 13,636. Payroll for people working in glass container manufacturing was (US) \$897,642,000 in 2018.

This represented a slight increase from payroll in 2016 – (US) \$895,757,000.

The value of shipments from glass container manufacturing firms totalled (US) \$4,627,031,000 in 2018 (the most recent year for this report), according to the U S Census Bureau. This statistic represents a decrease from the value of shipments in 2016 – (US) \$5,074,286,000 – and the value of shipments in 2010 – (US) \$4,937,651,000.

Glass Packaging Institute

In addition to the dedicated Glass Packaging Institute (GPI) article in this issue, Scott DeFife, GPI President, provided an overview of the glass packaging industry in a recent statement: “Whilst alcoholic beverage consumption trends are changing, resulting in a slight decline for beer sales, other categories for glass continue to expand, highlighting a path for stronger growth in the



Wine bottles are seen in a production line at Ardagh Group. (Photo provided courtesy of Frederick Julius Photography, November 14, 2017).

food, organic, health and functional beverages, wine and spirits categories. The societal and economic response to the Covid-19 crisis has accelerated in-store grocery purchasing and has given the industry an opportunity to remind consumers about the long-term stability of glass packaging for food and beverages, as well as medicine and pharmaceuticals.” The GPI describes itself as “the trade association for North American glass container manufacturers and the entire supply chain.”

The GPI indicated that “Through the third quarter, overall glass container food and beverage shipments are down a little over two percent, but up in key categories like food jars (up 10% YTD) and non-alcoholic beverages (up about two percent).”

“Although the glass packaging industry, like many others, has experienced challenges due to the Covid-19 pandemic, there have been bright spots during this time” Mr DeFife continued. “A significant increase for in-store grocery purchases in 2020 has given the glass packaging

industry a unique opportunity to remind the general public of the long-term sustainability of glass packaging for food and beverages. The economic impact of the pandemic has exposed the need to redouble efforts to collect more post-consumer glass for recycling and reuse and helped policy-makers better understand the connection between recycling and domestic manufacturing output. With more officials looking to build stronger, more resilient domestic supply chains, glass has a great opportunity to fill those needs.”▶



Dietary supplements sold by Live Wise Naturals are sold in glass bottles. (Photo provided courtesy of Live Wise Naturals).