

The Future of Reuse is Friendlier

How a standard for container washing is making safe reuse possible



THE CHALLENGE

Building trust in reuse without defined washing and inspection requirements

When Canadian reuse services provider Friendlier launched in 2020, reusable packaging systems were just gaining momentum as a sustainable alternative to single-use containers.

But one critical piece was missing: clear guidance and requirements on how reusable containers should be safely washed, sanitized, and inspected.

To fill this gap, Friendlier sought regulatory validation for its washing processes. However, the company quickly discovered a gap in oversight. Available public health regulations monitored at the provincial level only applied to food service establishments—not facilities for container washing. Similarly, at the federal level, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency also indicated that reuse services fall outside its regulatory scope.

As a result, Friendlier had to establish its own container washing and safety protocols from the ground up.

Drawing on strong process engineering backgrounds, the team at Friendlier developed rigorous standard operating procedures (SOPs), critical control points, and inspection processes so that containers were cleaned to a high standard.

However, validating those processes presented a further challenge.

For example, clients and prospective partners often asked: “How do we know these containers are consistently cleaned and safe to use?” Initially, Friendlier addressed these concerns by inviting clients to tour their facilities and review every step of their operations. While effective in demonstrating to clients that proper washing protocols were in place, this approach quickly became impractical as the company grew.

To provide additional reassurance, Friendlier commissioned a third-party, high-hygiene Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) audit. While this helped to build credibility, conducting such an audit was costly and still did not provide an industry-wide benchmark tailored specifically to reusable packaging systems.

THE SOLUTION

A binational standard for reusable container washing

By contributing industry expertise and key learnings from processes they had created for themselves, Friendlier contributed to the development of a standard for reusable packaging published by CSA Group and PR3 (a U.S.-based standards development organization).

Part of a broader set of reusable packaging system design standards, RES-002:25/CSA R303:25 establishes clear, consistent, consensus-based requirements for washing, sanitizing, inspection, and handling of reusable containers used for food and beverages so they can be safely reused at scale.

The standard defines core requirements for reusable container washing operations, including:

- Washing parameters
- Sanitation procedures
- Inspection processes



Why the Standard RES-002:25/CSA R303:25 matters

- Establishes trusted washing and sanitization requirements for reuse systems
- Helps enable consistent washing and inspection practices
- Supports scalable and interoperable reuse infrastructure
- Promotes confidence among clients, operators, and investors

- Drying procedures (*a consideration especially important for plastic containers that can be difficult to dry without risking re-contamination*)
- Packing for distribution

The new bi-national (Canada-U.S.) standard, developed with input from experts around the world, will help operators design systems that are safe, consistent, and scalable—in a simple way.

THE IMPACT

Enabling trust, consistency, and scale in reuse operations

Since its release, Friendlier has incorporated RES-002:25/CSA R303:25 into its operations, reinforcing the washing, sanitizing, inspecting, and handling protocols already in place across its facilities. Moreover, the standard provides a clear reference point for

conversations with clients and partners, while helping reassure them that reusable containers are cleaned and inspected in accordance with the new national standard and recognized best practices.

High-level impacts of RES-002:25/CSA R303:25 on Friendlier's operations:

- The standard provides a baseline to demonstrate alignment of Friendlier's SOPs with accepted minimum requirements and best practices to *help reassure customers concerned about sanitation and safe handling of reuse containers*
- When questions arise internally, such as why a particular inspection or sanitation step is required, *teams can point directly to the standard as the basis for those procedures*
- The standard also offers guidance for continuous improvement: *As Friendlier upgrades equipment or refines processes, the standard provides a framework for evaluating changes and maintaining compliance with established hygiene expectations*

From operators and partners to investors and customers—the standard helps strengthen trust across the reuse ecosystem.

Consistent standards such as RES-002:25/CSA R303:25 help ensure that as reuse systems expand, they operate safely, efficiently, and at scale. This way, standards support the transition from pilot reuse projects to a broader, system-wide adoption.

Friendlier's impact to date can serve as a shining example of what the future (for reuse) can look like.

Friendlier's impact at a glance*



5.5 million containers reused



922 tonnes of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions avoided



318 tonnes of waste prevented



44 million litres of water saved

*data provided by Friendlier

Learn how RES-002:25/CSA R303:25 can help your organization design safer, scalable, and more efficient reuse options.



www.csagroup.org/ContainerWashing

For more on other standards for reusable packaging systems, visit www.csagroup.org/Reuse.

About Friendlier

Friendlier is a trusted reuse partner for campuses, foodservice operators, and institutions across North America, delivering turnkey reusable packaging systems that simplify the shift away from single-use packaging. Friendlier's model combines durable packaging, digital tools that support engagement and environmental impact tracking, and reliable collection and sanitization services that keep reusable containers in active circulation while easing operational demands.

www.friendlier.com