

Shifting interests: Sustainability in the industry

This is a special feature from *PAX International's 2022 Amenities & Comfort digital edition with bonus Food & Beverage coverage*, on [page 12](#).



From food waste and packaging to operations, discussions of sustainability are a huge focus for the aviation industry right now. In this Q&A, PAX International speaks with Roland Standaert, Account Executive at Texas-based RMT Global Partners, about what is moving in sustainability.

PAX International: What is trending in sustainability?

Standaert: In the beginning we felt that some sustainability efforts from airlines were more marketing driven. Airlines promoted eco-friendly passenger comfort products to promote their green credentials and generate positive PR. Recycling and recycled materials such as RPET featured prominently in those campaigns even though the products may not always have been as sustainable as intended.

However, now that new legislation and regulations have come into force, we have noticed a distinct trend where the sustainable responsibility has moved to procurement, which has given the operational side of the business a bigger voice in sustainability efforts. This shift toward different products and processes not only makes the inflight products more eco-friendly but also helps improve sustainability in operations. For example, rotatable items not only help reduce the amount of single-use plastic waste that is sent to landfill, but also reduces some of the carbon footprint since less product is shipped around the world.

PAX International: How does RMT Global Partners incorporate sustainability into its partnerships to redefine modern travel?

Standaert: We have started partnerships with manufacturers nearer to our main US customer base. One of those partnerships has resulted in our recent development of products manufactured locally at a factory in Mexico. This is for a new range of cutlery and barware, such as stirrers and straws, which are made of a new bio-plastic material derived from agave fiber, a byproduct from the production of tequila.

It is a brand-new, exclusive product which we are bringing to the market. It will allow our customers to offer single-use items which are completely biodegradable in regular waste streams and don't require specialized or industrial composting facilities.

We have also found that one product doesn't fit every customer's requirements, which is why we are offering a variety of sustainable options to suit different needs. We give our customers a range of options to mix and match to fit with their inflight service.

For instance, we now offer our single-use cutlery items made of PLA, wood, paper, or agave which allows our customers to pick the item that best matches their sustainability goals and budget constraints.

PAX International: We've discussed the current trends, but what is the future of sustainability?

Standaert: We see a continued drive to more sustainable sourcing, not just for products, but also the way our customers manage their operations. For several customers we are looking at alternative sourcing routes and finding locally manufactured products to help them reduce their logistics carbon footprint and reduce costs.

Local manufacturing has not always been economically viable for cost-sensitive passenger comfort items. However, the dramatic increase in costs of shipping we have seen in the last 18 months and the delays at ports have made some of our customers evaluate the risks to their supply chain. We believe that the demand for more sustainable, local manufacturing will only increase in the years to come.