



Breaking News on Food Processing & Packaging

Sustainable packaging reports unveils common language and metrics

By Rory Harrington, 05-Jul-2010

A new report that sets out for the first time a common language and metrics for sustainable packaging will help reduce its carbon footprint, cut costs and boost the industry's public image, said the Global Packaging Project (GPP).

The study, released under the umbrella of the Consumer Goods Forum, said it aims to deliver a common language and measurement system to *"enable more informed dialogue between trading partners about the relationship between packaging and sustainability"*.

The global group hailed the report as a call to action for the industry. It marked the beginning rather than the completion of an evolving process for the packaging sector to ensure its products carried out their primary functions while minimising their environment effects, it added.

The report authors said laying down such basic tools for communication and quantifying packaging eco-performance will *"enable better decision-making, both within companies and across the value chain"* that will lead to *"cost reductions, reduced environmental impact and improved customer perception"*.

After highlighting the vital role of packaging, the report considers the principles of sustainability – spotlighting the environmental, economic and social aspects and explaining the importance of a life-cycle approach.

The final part looks at the meeting points between the role of packaging and sustainability principles.

Role of packaging

The report puts forward a robust case of the role packaging plays in delivering the product to the consumer in perfect condition. It points out that reductions in packaging become counter-productive where the increase in product loss exceeds the savings in packing reduction.

"Well-designed packaging will meet the requirements of the product while minimising the economic, social and environmental impacts of both the product and the package", said the report.

Packaging and sustainability

Packaging plays a critical economic, environmental and sustainable role by protecting products. Reducing packing should only be done if it maintains or reduces the impacts of the packed products and optimal performance is achieved when both are *"designed together from inception"*.

It stresses there is *"no such thing as good or bad packaging material"* –as all have advantages and disadvantages depending on how they are used.

Indicators and Metrics

The report also summarises a comprehensive list of indicators and metrics to help organisations understand *"where they are, where they are going and how much further they need to go relative to a stated goal"*. Some 52 indicators are listed under the headings of environmental – including weight, waste and chain of custody; social – including safety and child labour and economic – including the total cost of packaging.

Detailed information on metrics- which will be updated continuously – can be found by going to <http://globalpackaging.mycgforum.com/>

The report is part of a range of pilot studies currently being implemented by the Consumer Goods Forum, and whose results will be shared at the end of 2010. The metrics and indicators, therefore, are likely to be *"refined"*, said the GPP. It added that in order to work all the project recommendations must *"become a part of the way we do business"* and be adopted by participating companies.

The GPP is a partnership of many of the world's leading packaging manufacturers and converters as well as industry bodies, retailers and research institutes. Its members include Amcor, TetraPak, Nestle, Walmart, SCA and Ball, Europen and the Sustainable Packaging Coalition.

For a copy of the report contact EUROPEN or Sabine Ritter, of the Consumer Goods Forum, at s.ritter@theconsumergoodsforum.com

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