



Breaking News on Food Processing & Packaging

## Sainsbury's faces prosecution on excess packaging charge

By Rory Harrington, 17-Sep-2010

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**UK supermarket chain Sainsbury's is facing prosecution over charges that excess packaging on one of its fresh beef products could cause unnecessary environmental damage.**

The case against the retail giant is due to go before the courts next month and relates to allegations that its premium beef product has too much packaging. The action is being brought by Lincolnshire County Council, in England, after it received a complaint from a Sainsbury's customer about the product in the company's Lincoln store.

### Unnecessary packaging

The charge states that on or before 17 February the packaging used by the company did not meet essential requirements.

*"Namely the packaging volume of a Taste the Difference Slow Matured Ultimate Beef Roasting Joint was not limited to the minimum adequate amount to maintain the necessary level of safety, hygiene and acceptance for the said beef roasting joint,"* said the charge for the case due to be heard at Lincoln Magistrates' Court on 13 October .

The council said it had a duty to enforce regulations which require businesses to review and reduce their packaging so that items are packaged to ensure product protection and customer acceptance.

*"Excessive packaging on goods can cause unnecessary damage to the environment and increases costs associated with recycling and landfill,"* said Peter Heafield, head of trading standards, in a statement to FoodProductionDaily.com *"Following a consumer complaint about a product available in Sainsbury's, Trading Standards carried out an investigation which has resulted in the matter being brought before the court."*

But a Sainsbury's spokesman said the firm was *"surprised"* by the comments which he said did not reflect the positive outcome of a meeting it had had with the council's packaging team. Sainsbury's said that since February the packing on the product had been lightweighted by 53 per cent and was set to be reduced by a further 10 per cent within the next few months. It added that reducing packaging was a key part of its environmental commitment.

The supermarket said it had been told by council that it was reviewing its decision about whether to continue with the court case. But a council spokeswoman told FoodProductionDaily.com yesterday that the decision to prosecute the firm remained unchanged.

### Vital role

*"Packaging is essential to ensure food remains fresh and undamaged, thereby preventing food waste, and we are committed to finding ways to reduce it while ensuring it remains functional,"* said the company.

This view was echoed by Richard Dodd of the British Retail Consortium who said it was a myth that packaging on food automatically equalled waste.

*"Packaging has a vital role in protecting and preserving the product,"* he said. *"The environmental impact of food waste is dramatically more significant than packaging. Using packaging intelligently to protect and preserve food reduces the amount that goes to waste and is extremely good for the environment."*

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