



# Position Paper Sustainable Packaging



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## ■ Sustainable Packaging

*"Better Quality Of Life Through Better Packaging For More People"* is the primary purpose of the World Packaging Organisation. WPO believes that we can help Society learn to value the importance of Packaging through effective education. By bringing together people, industry, and government in a constructive, productive way, Packaging will become respected as the vital tool that it undeniably is.

Packaging is used everywhere, by highly industrialized countries and developing nations alike. Good Packaging is a most-important tool for the well-being and safety of people, and for successful commerce. Packaging contains, preserves, protects, transports, and communicates. We cannot survive without Packaging.

The dilemma is that as world population increases and world-wide distribution chains become more sophisticated, the corresponding increase in the use of Packaging has the potential of becoming as much a problem as a solution. In some parts of the world, some poorly informed people are actively campaigning for a strict reduction, and in some cases, elimination of Packaging. This regression is based on a lack of understanding of the overall impact on Society.

Actually, packaging has tremendous resource-savings potential. Clearly, over-packaging consumes too many resources. Under-packaging allows for damage and spoilage of contents, also wasting resources. The goal is "right size" packaging. It is a holistic view that balances the proper use of resources against the environmental, social, and financial needs of Society.

But the facts are clear. The production of Packaging materials consumes both natural and human resources. The application of those materials further uses more valuable resources. Finally, the disposal of Packaging materials into landfills, incinerators, and, inappropriately, on the sides of countless highways and roads as litter, also requires the utilization of more valuable resources, many of which could have been used again, or differently.

Clearly, Sustainable Packaging is transforming the values of the Packaging Community. This change in philosophy will bind together WPO with its goals in a new, more dynamic way. And ultimately, the whole of Society will benefit.

WPO intends to bring this initiative forward for all members of the Packaging Community including, non-profit educational groups, standards organizations, for-profit commercial ventures, and trade organisations. All will benefit from the efforts of WPO, its members and partners to educate others. Through these efforts, the Packaging Community will better understand the importance of global collaboration and teamwork in packaging development, application, reuse, recycle and recovery.

Many Packaging materials have not been thought of as renewable, at least until recently. With the introduction of the hypothesis of Sustainable Development, that pattern is changing dramatically. As defined by the Brundtland Commission, led by the former Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland, sustainable development is development that "meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

And so it is with Packaging too. The new model for Packaging requires that sustainable methods and materials be employed whenever possible, and even where it may seem to be impossible.

Clearly, "reduce, reuse, recycle, recover" are not just empty, idealistic words any longer. They are the basis for an operative, powerful model that will grow significantly over the next few years. For example, consider

what is taking place in EU countries and other parts of the world today. Serious legislation is being passed that requires “cradle to cradle” responsibility for all Packaging materials. This legislation has the potential to cause serious increases in costs throughout the supply chain, ultimately harming the consumer and commerce, perhaps unnecessarily. So it is the responsibility of the Packaging Community to address these issues in practical ways that are economically, socially and environmentally sustainable. In some regions of the world, this goal may already have been partially achieved and may provide a good model for regions endeavoring to work through this issue.

WPO, as an important member of the Packaging Community, intends to take an active, leadership role in addressing this issue where total cost and total value intersect. The World cannot do without Packaging, but the World can also use Packaging more effectively and efficiently, meeting the needs of people while being conscious about sustaining the environment and all its resources, natural and otherwise. “Better quality of life,” as stated in WPO’s purpose, isn’t just about this generation. “Better quality of life” is evident in Brundtland’s Sustainability requirement “to meet the needs of future generations” as well.

In the effort to carry forward the circle of sustainability, WPO aims to globally promote:

- Increase the positive economic, social and environmental impact of Packaging on society;
- Reduction of the negative environmental impact of Packaging on society and the environment;
- Development of Packaging technology, sciences, and engineering;
- Communication concerning Packaging technology and applications;
- Advancement of Packaging skills and expertise through education;
- A forum for national and international organisations to further the state of the art of Packaging;
- Expansion of international trade.

WPO believes that Sustainable Packaging will become so rooted in global culture that the word “*Sustainable*” will become redundant and will be no longer used in our daily vocabulary. All packaging will become Sustainable.

This new way of thinking plays well to WPO’s unique position in the Packaging Community. Dr. Carl Olsmats, General Secretary of WPO states that Sustainability “in principle means that continuous improvement has to be applied to all packaging. There will always be a demand for training and education in order to accomplish [this] task.”

Society demands, without really knowing it, that Packaging Professionals ‘get it right.’ Efficient and effective use of resources in Packaging is essential to Society’s aim to reach Sustainability. The World Packaging Organization is committed to continuing to bring together many of the great minds within the Packaging Community as we work toward our goal of “*Better Quality Of Life Through Better Packaging For More People*”.