

## Packaging Motion

Packaging is an integral part of the industrial and commercial supply chain. It protects goods from damage, allows efficient transport distribution, offers convenience, prolongs shelf-life, enables easy use, informs the consumer and helps to promote goods in a competitive market place. However, every year, around 10 million tonnes of packaging waste is produced in the UK, most of which is disposed of through landfill. Approximately 30% of all packaging material is recovered, of which most is recycled.

The European Commission has set targets for Member States to recover and recycle packaging waste. At least 60% of the UK's packaging waste must be recovered by 31<sup>st</sup> December 2008 and 55-80% must be recycled.

In response to this, the UK has established two sets of packaging regulations.

### **1. Packaging (Essential Requirements) Regulations 2003 Statutory Instrument 2003 No. 1941**

The Regulations require any packaging used on goods to be minimised in terms of weight and volume – taking into account safety, hygiene and consumer acceptance. They prescribe maximum permitted levels of heavy metals and that packaging must be recoverable through at least one of the following:

- Material recycling
- Incineration with energy recovery
- Composting or biodegradation

The Regulations apply to persons who pack or fill the packaging, or claim to have done so by putting their name on the packaging or the importer of the packaging. The Regulations are also relevant to those specifying, designing and producing packaging.

The Regulations are enforced by the Trading Standards Department and aims to reduce the waste packaging at source. The Council understands that local Trading Standards at Wiltshire County Council are focussing their attention on education rather than enforcement at the present time.

This legislation is relevant to the producers of the packaging as well as the supermarkets who have their name on their own brand packaging. The Essential Requirements apply to all businesses throughout the UK, regardless of turnover and the quantities of packaging manufactured.

### **2. Producer Responsibility Obligations (Packaging Waste) Regulations 2005 Statutory Instrument 2005. No. 3468**

These regulations require certain businesses to recover and recycle specified amounts of waste every year. They apply only to businesses that:

- Handle more than 50 tonnes of obligated packaging or packaging materials a year

- Have an annual turnover per year of £2million

These regulations are based on the total packaging handled, not the amount produced. If applicable, businesses must demonstrate that a specified amount of their packaging waste is recycled or recovered every year.

Packaging reduction can begin by asking some simple, fundamental questions, such as can the product be altered to reduce or eliminate the need for packaging, can bulk handling be adopted, or can layers of 'secondary' packaging be avoided?

Industry is already recycling 30% of used packaging, at a cost of £62 million a year. This will increase due to the targets set of 50% recycled. Packaging is being designed to balance protection of the content, the needs of consumers and the environment, legal requirements and cost. Improvements are being made by using the Responsible Packaging Code and providing and promoting consumer information.

The "Courtauld Commitment" is an agreement that has been signed by the major supermarkets to develop their own programme designed to reduce packaging and minimise waste produced, whilst working alongside WRAP (Waste Resources Action Programme). Ideas include reducing packaging layers, light-weighting materials and also initiating research into why consumers throw away an average of £400-worth of food each year.

The Women's Institute has an active "Stop Excess Packaging" campaign. WI members from across the country returned unnecessary and excess packaging to supermarkets on their packaging day of action on 20 June 2006. They asked the supermarkets to improve their environmental policies on packaging and food waste. The publicity response was huge and supermarkets were quick to respond with proposed action on packaging reduction and greater use of biodegradable packaging.

During the recent launch of Alternate Weekly Collections, Kennet District Council Members and Officers attended many public meetings. The most common request from Kennet residents was for the Council to use its influence to persuade supermarkets and manufacturers to minimise the amount of packaging thrust upon them.

The recommendations of this motion are that:

Kennet District Council formally writes to the Department of Environment, Food & Rural Affairs as the relevant Government department noting the Councils support for the Packaging (Essential Requirements) Regulations 2003 and the Producer Responsibility Obligations (Packaging Waste) Regulations 2005 and urge the government to ensure that these regulations are strictly enforced.

Kennet District Council writes to the Head Offices of supermarkets, expressing Kennet residents' views on the minimisation of packaging and to urge them to deliver practical solutions from their own "Courtald Commitment".

Kennet District Council explores solutions to minimise packaging waste within the development of its next Waste Minimisation and Recycling Strategy, 2007-2010. Such solutions should include, but not be limited to, the promotion of the re-use of shopping bags, encouraging the purchasing of "loose" fruit and vegetables, encouraging the use of re-usable containers (as used for doorstep deliveries of milk and fruit juices), exploring new recycling services for plastics and cardboard.