

Get Ready Pack



What action is your business taking to reduce environmental impacts from the manufacture, use and disposal of packaging?

Improving the sustainability of packaging can generate real cost savings for businesses by:

- Reducing use of water, energy and materials in the production of the packaging
- Lowering transport and distribution costs
- Minimising waste generation and associated disposal costs

This fact sheet is intended to provide an overview of the key issues which should be considered by businesses seeking to improve the sustainability of packaging, while at the same time safeguarding product integrity. Businesses should also consider signing on to the National Packaging Covenant.

Regardless of where your company sits in the packaging supply chain you can have an impact

PACKAGING DESIGNERS: The market is increasingly demanding lower cost packaging and packaging that can be re-used and recycled. Development of innovative packaging solutions may generate increased market opportunities

PACKAGING MANUFACTURERS: By reducing raw material use, packaging manufacturers can reduce manufacturing and transport costs

PACKAGING FILLERS: Taking action to eliminate or minimise packaging materials used for the supply of your products could reduce input and transportation costs and reduce packaging waste for customers at end of life

DISTRIBUTORS: More efficient packaging can reduce warehouse, distribution and transportation costs

Some practical tips to consider

DESIGN

- Consider whether packaging can be re-designed to improve resource efficiency and reduce cost without compromising the product.
- Reduce costs by eliminating any unnecessary materials in the design of the packaging. Engage with customers to ensure you have a clear understanding of their requirements.
- Understand the market(s) in which the packaging will be sold. What regulatory requirements exist? For example understand shelf life requirements, handling and distribution methods, occupational health and safety considerations.
- Identify the essential messages that the packaging must convey to wholesalers/distributors/users (eg product ingredients/inputs, storage and handling requirements, marketing messages) and ensure that the packaging design meets these requirements while minimising materials used.
- Identify alternatives to any coatings/laminates/inks/add-ons that may act as a barrier to recycling and reduce costs of manufacture and disposal.
- Assess opportunities for packaging to be designed to incorporate recycled/recyclable materials and be recyclable at end of life. For further information refer to the Environmental Code of Practice for Packaging.
- Design packaging to be compatible with kerbside recycling.

MANUFACTURE

- Reduce costs by minimising the quantity of overall packaging used. Minimising packaging at source helps to keep costs down throughout the supply chain. e.g. Can packaging weight and/or thickness be reduced?
- Engage with suppliers, distributors and customers to define their requirements.
- Assess the feasibility of incorporating recycled material in the packaging.
- Identify whether cost effective local sources of materials inputs exist to reduce transport costs and subsequent greenhouse gas emissions.



- Identify whether your packaging can be re-used. Consult with companies involved in collection, sorting and reprocessing of the packaging.
- Can packaging shipped prior to filling be compacted to minimise space requirements and reduce transport costs and emissions?

FILLING

- Evaluate new and existing packaging and seek to reduce costs by minimising the quantity of overall packaging used.
- Identify the amount of packaging that is required to safeguard product integrity and for market promotion/communication. Can avenues other than disposable packaging be used to convey product or marketing information? Ensure that all 'green claims' made on packaging can be substantiated.
- Source packaging and packaging inputs from suppliers who implement environmental best practice. For example, identify whether your packaging suppliers are signatories to the National Packaging Covenant and comply with the Environmental Code of Practice for Packaging (see below).
- Consider whether changes could be made to your product to reduce the requirement for packaging (e.g. can the product be concentrated?) and save packaging and transportation costs.
- Is packaging optimally filled? Is there opportunity to alter dimensions of outer packaging and increase the number of saleable units per carton?
- Understand the mechanical handling and transportation requirements for your packaged product, including compatibility with pallet sizes.
- Increasing pressure is being placed on industry to address issues of litter. Identify whether your packaging typically ends up in the litter stream. Consider strategies to reduce the propensity of packaging to become litter at end of life by minimising the number of separable components and providing consumers with information to encourage appropriate behaviours.

DISTRIBUTION

- Examine what opportunities exist to achieve efficiencies in distribution and logistics to reduce material and energy consumption without compromising product integrity.
- Assess whether it is possible to improve the configuration of packaging pallets to minimize energy and resource demand.
- Assess whether secondary packaging for transport can be reduced or even eliminated.

PACKAGING RE-USE, RECYCLING AND DISPOSAL

- Assess the need for all packaging arriving on-site. Engage with employees and help them to identify what role they can play in reducing the impact of packaging.
- Minimise your costs of disposal of waste packaging by segregating waste at source according to type and value. Get the maximum revenue from your waste by prioritizing re use,

recycling or return of higher value packaging material.

- Minimise the volume of waste to minimise costs e.g. flatten and compact waste where possible.
- Promote reducing, re-using and recycling of packaging by providing customers with information regarding your packaging and its materials to help them to handle, re-use and recycle the materials.
- Engage with wholesalers and retailers to promote re-use and recycling and reduce the impact of packaging.
- Identify whether your packaging waste can be re-used by others and consider energy recovery and materials recycling. Consult with companies involved in collection, sorting and reprocessing of the packaging.

National Packaging Covenant

The National Packaging Covenant is a voluntary initiative by Government and industry, to reduce the environmental effects of packaging on the Environment. The Covenant is designed to minimise environmental impacts arising from the disposal of used packaging, conserve resources through better design and production processes and facilitate the re-use and recycling of used packaging materials.

The Covenant is based on the principle of product stewardship, which is an approach that acknowledges that all those involved in producing, manufacturing, selling, using and disposing of products have a shared responsibility to ensure their environmentally sound management. Strategies to address environmental impacts of packaging and packaged products should be considered across the packaging supply and recovery chain. The Covenant is underpinned by the National Environment Protection Measure (NEPM) for Used Packaging Materials which is implemented by legislation in each State and Territory. This regulatory framework encourages participation in the Covenant, by requiring non Covenant signatory "Brand Owners" to undertake systematic recovery of the packaging in which their products are sold to the consumer and implement significant data collection on their packaging they use, collection and reprocessing.

Environmental Code of Practice for Packaging

Signatories to the National Packaging Covenant are required to implement the Environmental Code of Practice for Packaging which has been designed to provide companies (both signatories and non-signatories) with guidelines to help evaluate the environmental impact of new and existing packaging.

Further information

Contact Ai Group's Energy and Sustainable Business Help Desk on 1300 733 752 or sustainablebusiness@aigroup.asn.au.