

# Recycled Packaging & How it Impacts the Food Industry

## Walmart Scorecard's Impact on Packaging

During a PACK Expo keynote in 2006, Walmart launched the packaging scorecard initiative. Since then, brands have been continuing to update and revise their packaging to create a more environmentally-friendly solution. Below is an outline of how the sustainable initiative has impacted the food industry across various package types, including paper-based, plastic, glass, and aluminum.

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## **Paper-Based Packaging and Poly-Replacements**

Paper and paper-based products, such as cartons and paperboard, are easy to recycle, and the resultant recycled material is extremely versatile. More than half of Americans have easy access to paper recycling — an amount which is

expected to increase rapidly — and there are far fewer restrictions on recycling paper than plastic.

For applications such as food safe packaging and high-end brand displays, coatings are utilized to provide the appropriate properties. To achieve a recyclable, paper-based package for these types of applications, water-based coatings are often required.

To address this, Sierra is working with nationally-recognized chemical companies to qualify reliable eco-friendly coatings. Our water-based, eco-friendly coatings can meet biodegradable, compostable, and fully recyclable requirements. These coatings also possess important properties to aid in brand awareness efforts; they are easy to print over and allow for optimal packaging aesthetics.

## **Plastic Brand Packaging**

One of the biggest challenges with recyclable, plastic packaging is the restrictions involved with recycling plastic material. It is estimated that 95% of recyclable plastic packaging, amounting between \$80 and \$120 billion worth of packaging material, is wasted on an annual basis.

While outreach, recovery, reclamation, and recycling efforts can be effective for multinational corporations, they may be cost-prohibitive for smaller or regional brands. For these businesses, investing in eco-friendly packaging is often a more practical, actionable solution.

Recycling plastic presents a three-fold problem:

1. Public access to plastic recycling facilities or programs is surprisingly limited;
2. Different municipalities levy often confusing recyclability restrictions based on plastic type, size, and shape; and
3. The recycling process is costly in terms of money and energy use.

### **Aluminum, Glass and Plastic Bottles**

As demand rises for sustainable products, brands are prioritizing green initiatives, such as eco-friendly packaging and packaging recovery.

The Coca-Cola Company, for example, has established an extremely ambitious recycling initiative — by 2020, they aim to recover and recycle a full 75% of the beverage containers, bottles, and cans they produce annually. Working with The Recycling Partnership, Coca-Cola has already recycled 59% of their output.

This is just one example of the growing sentiment in favor of environmentally conscious initiatives; worldwide, consumers are looking to brands to lead conservation efforts with sustainable, environmentally friendly packaging options.

To learn how to make your food packaging eco-friendly without sacrificing your unique brand identity, contact our chemical experts.