

YOUR FUTURE IN FOOD

THE FUTURE OF SUSTAINABLE PACKAGING

What it Means to Your Food Business



The need for sustainable packaging has never been greater as we try to mitigate the environmental impact of packaging waste.

1. Materials and Practices:

- Food companies are increasingly moving toward more sustainable practices and materials for packaging. This involves reducing unnecessary plastic use and exploring the viability of alternatives.
- Alternative materials to plastics could be biodegradable or compostable options such as plant-based materials like seaweed, sugar and corn products.
- Food processors are also exploring the increased use of metal, glass or paper.
- No one material, however, is without its challenges, as there are issues around the availability of municipal composting facilities and glass recycling capabilities.
- Packaging is evolving to focus on materials that are biodegradable, recyclable, reusable and less toxic.

2. Circular Economy and Recycled Content:

- Food manufacturers are innovating new packaging designs to improve circularity (keeping plastics in the economy and out of the landfill) and removing or reducing unnecessary materials.
- Plastics manufacturers are increasing the recycled content within their products, including post-consumer resin, and turning toward less problematic or fully recyclable materials.

3. Consumer Awareness and Preferences:

- Consumers, particularly younger generations, are increasingly demanding that companies prioritize sustainability.
- Sustainable products have experienced 2.7 times faster growth as compared to traditional goods, despite price premiums.

The future of sustainable packaging lies in a combination of innovative materials, circular economy principles, and consumer-driven demand for greener options. It will take an all-hands-on-deck approach to make an impact. The packaging industry, food processors, retailers and governments will all have their parts to play.

Food Processing and Packaging Industry

The number one priority across the food value chain is the topic of sustainability, with many packaging manufacturers, food processors and retailers setting ambitious sustainability targets for themselves.

The Canada Plastics Pact (CPP) is a comprehensive initiative that is being implemented across the value chain. The CPP is a commitment to create a circular economy in Canada in which plastic waste is kept in the economy and out of the environment. The CPP aims to focus on the root causes of plastics pollution, work collaboratively across the value chain to enable industry-wide systemic change, and mobilize stakeholders towards a common vision.



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The CPP aims to reduce plastic waste, promote recycling, and drive innovation in sustainable packaging and materials. It is a collaborative effort to address the plastic pollution challenge and create a more sustainable future. A number of large Canadian food processors and plastics manufacturers have signed onto the pact.

Manufacturers are working to introduce packaging materials that are more easily recyclable and contain less plastic. The use of new packaging technology and alternative materials are also being explored.

The Retailer

Canadian grocery retailers have been actively working toward various short- and long-term sustainability goals. Here are some notable initiatives:

- achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions
- work to make all store-branded product and in-store plastic packaging recyclable or reusable
- send zero food waste to landfills by 2030
- reduce avoidable and hard-to-recycle plastics throughout the value chain
- support the Government of Canada's Action Plan on Zero Plastic Waste

Government

Canada's Action Plan on Zero Plastic Waste 2030, is a phased-in approach to reducing plastic waste. The first step in the plan involved banning single use plastic packaging, placing the responsibility on retailers.

The plan, developed in co-operation with all levels of government, includes establishing a Federal Plastics Registry that will require companies (including resin manufacturers, service providers and producers of plastic products) to report annually on the quantity and types of plastic they manufacture, import, and place on the market. Producers of plastic products will also be required to report on the quantity of plastic collected for diversion, or was reused, repaired, remanufactured, refurbished, recycled, composted, incinerated, and landfilled. Reporting will be mandatory.

The Federal Plastics Registry sets a clear path to collecting critical information that will inform and support the implementation of Canada's plan and help measure progress over time to prevent plastic pollution and protect the environment.

Proposed regulations would require minimum levels of recycled post-consumer plastics in packaging and increased recyclability. Provinces and territories are expanding collection programs to support increased recycling opportunities.

Globally, similar initiatives are taking place, with European countries leading the way. Canadian food processing companies will need to ensure that their products are produced and packaged sustainably in order to compete.

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Alternative Materials

There are several sustainable alternatives to plastic for food packaging on the horizon:

1. **Compostable Plant-Based Materials:** Companies like Achieve Pack are using 100 percent compostable plant-based materials to produce containers for food and beverages.
2. **Glass:** Glass can be a great alternative to plastic for food packaging. It is non-toxic, recyclable, and reusable.
3. **Stainless Steel:** Stainless steel is becoming increasingly popular for food packaging due to its durability and environmental benefits.
4. **Beeswax Food Wraps:** These wraps are made from organic cotton infused with beeswax, resin, and jojoba oil.
5. **Biodegradable and Compostable Packaging Materials:** Materials, such as paper, cellulose, and plant-based bioplastics, are being developed as more sustainable options.
6. **Bamboo:** Bamboo is a fast-growing, renewable resource that can be used for food packaging.
7. **Bagasse:** Bagasse, made from sugarcane waste and is compostable and biodegradable, is used for items like plates, bowls, and takeaway containers.
8. **Cardboard:** Cardboard is strong, durable and recyclable, and can be used for packaging dry goods and produce.
9. **Areca Palm Leaves:** These natural leaves are used to make disposable plates and bowls and are biodegradable and compostable.

As consumers and retailers become more conscious of sustainability, food processors are increasingly adopting new practices and technologies to remain competitive. Level up your sustainability game.

Manitoba Agriculture can help you build your future in food. Our business development specialists offer consulting, pathfinding services and resources that will help you manage and grow your business.

For more information:

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