

WOOLWORTHS

WOOLWORTHS PACKAGING POSITION STATEMENT

BACKGROUND

Globally, the use of packaging has dramatically increased in the past few decades, resulting in an increase in the need for raw or recycled material resources and an escalating pressure on consumers to manage packaging as it becomes waste. Whilst this is a clear challenge for the retail industry, packaging does fulfil a number of critical value-adding functions as outlined below:

- It keeps products safe from harm on their journey from source to home.
- It enables efficient transport and handling.
- It provides products with identity and shelf presence.
- It provides consumers with convenience e.g. ready-to-eat foods.
- It protects products against tampering and theft.
- It provides consumers with important legal and useful information e.g. price, instructions, ingredient lists, nutritional values, allergy labels etc.
- In the case of foods, it often extends shelf life and prevents food waste by protecting the food against moisture, light, flavour loss etc. For example, a cucumber wrapped in plastic (which slows down the respiration rate of the cucumber) has a shelf life three times longer than an unwrapped cucumber which may go rotten before it can be eaten.

OUR COMMITMENT

Woolworths is committed to the following packaging principles:

- Designing packaging holistically - bearing social, environmental and commercial factors in mind.
- Meeting consumer choice and expectations.
- Using packaging materials that are effective and safe.
- Using responsibly sourced materials.
- Preferring materials that are renewable.
- Preferring materials that are recyclable in South Africa.
- Optimising performance at the lowest overall cost.

Whilst Woolworths understands that most used packaging becomes waste and this is undesirable, our approach is about achieving the right balance. In our quest to create the perfect package, it is inevitable that trade-offs between environmental, social and commercial factors may sometimes occur. Our role is to ensure that the best practicable option is developed, which attempts to minimise environmental impact whilst delivering a fit-for purpose product, at an acceptable price. These trade-offs can result in packaging which is not easy to recycle.

Nevertheless, we are committed to designing our packaging for recyclability, minimising the need for non-renewable resources, as well as driving the market for recycled material



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through inclusion of recycled content in our packaging and products. We apply several overarching principles when designing packaging:

- a) Using as few packaging materials as possible, in any one pack, to allow for ease of recycling.
- b) Using pre- and post-consumer recycled content in cardboard and plastic packaging wherever possible.
- c) Using mono-materials rather than composite materials where possible.
- d) Designing for ease of separation to allow recycling.
- e) Clearly communicating the pack material and recycling message.
- f) Designing packs in such a way as all the contents can be easily extracted.
- g) Avoiding the use of logos and icons that could confuse consumers.
- h) Avoiding the use of extraneous or additional items on packs on primary packs as they may contaminate recycling streams.

Almost all materials used by Woolworths for packaging are *technically* recyclable, but due to limitations and availability in the collection and recycling infrastructure in South Africa, it is only the rigid, heavy containers (cartons, glass bottles and metal cans) that are *widely* recycled. The light flexible containers (bags, wraps and films), often contaminated with food hold very little value for recyclers and are not yet widely recycled. Waste-to-energy plants should address this in the longer term.

To help our consumers recycle their packaging, we have stopped printing the polymer identification logos (a number inside a triangle of three chasing arrows) on our packaging as they implied that the packaging was recyclable. In their place, we have introduced On-Pack Recycling Labels which are based on what can actually be recycled in most metropolitan areas in South Africa. We review this annually. By making recycling information clearer, we hope that much more waste will be recycled; less contamination will occur in recycling streams and that more investment will be made in recycling infrastructure.

To learn more about where to drop your recyclables and about recycling in general, please visit:

- Collect-a-Can
- My Waste
- Paper Recycling Association of South Africa
- PETCO
- PlasticsSA
- POLYCO
- Polystyrene Packaging Council
- The Glass Recycling Company

INNOVATION

Woolworths is constantly reviewing ways in which to reduce raw and non-renewable material usage through innovation.

Woolworths was the first major South African retailer to begin using recycled beverage (rPET), juice and milk (rHDPE) bottles in product packaging. Recycling beverage, juice and



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milk bottles not only reduces the amount of waste that goes to landfill, it saves natural resources and energy, and helps create jobs.

In a first for dairy in South Africa, Woolworths subsequently replaced plastic milk bottles with a version containing 30% plant based material, made from sugar cane, a renewable raw-material source that captures CO₂ and reduces dependence on oil-based alternatives. The plastic is recyclable with all other conventional plastics in South Africa.

COLLABORATION

Woolworths is also committed to involving and influencing the packaging industry to develop more sustainable packaging options. We work with various industry bodies like PETCO and POLYCO to encourage the development of recycling facilities, to help make recycling easier for our customers.

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