

# Planetpro

NESTLÉ PROFESSIONAL SUSTAINABILITY MAGAZINE

Embracing  
the circular  
economy

Making  
informed  
choices

Simple steps  
you can take  
today



# Keep Packaging in the Loop

# THE ROLE OF PACKAGING

In many ways, our modern food system wouldn't be possible without packaging.

We ask a lot of the containers that hold our foods and beverages. They protect food from damage and spills during transportation and storage. They also provide a barrier against physical or microbial contamination, tampering, and oxidation that can impact flavour, freshness, and quality.<sup>1</sup> All these functions are critical for maintaining the safety and quality of food, extending its shelf life, and preventing unnecessary food waste.

Packaging is also an important way to share information. From ingredients and nutrition labels to crucial messages about how to prepare and store the contents, packaging labels share important details with everyone who encounters them. And packages can even help with practical functions like portioning and point-of-sale display.<sup>1</sup>

For all these reasons, some form of packaging is essential. While too many packages are thrown away after a single use instead of being reused or recycled, there would be still more waste generated from food if it were shipped and stored unprotected. In this issue, we'll evaluate some common packaging materials and consider how manufacturers, food service operators, and consumers could work together to help packaging protect food while minimizing its impact on the planet.

## WHAT ARE AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND DOING TO MINIMISE THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS OF PACKAGING?

Sustainability is major focus globally, with many countries introducing initiatives to reduce packaging waste and the amount of waste that ends up in landfill.

In Australia, and New Zealand, government, industry, research institutes and communities are all working to reduce the environmental impacts of packaging and enable a coordinated approach to tackling plastics.

The ambition is to deliver a new and sustainable approach to all packaging that is made, used, and sold.



Learn more about Australia:

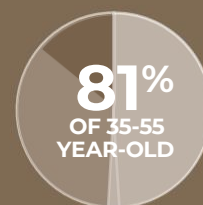
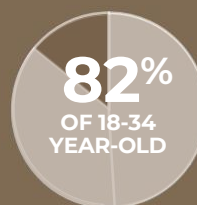
<https://apco.org.au/the-australian-packaging-covenant><sup>2</sup>

Learn more about New Zealand:

<https://environment.govt.nz/assets/publications/National-Plastics-Action-Plan.pdf><sup>3</sup>

# Around the world, people are paying more attention to packaging and the ways we interact with it.

**66%** Of New Zealanders are concerned about the build up of plastics in the environment.<sup>4</sup>



Over 80% of Australians say it's important that products are packaged sustainably.<sup>5</sup>



## CONSUMER *Attitudes to recycling*



Research into consumer insights about recycling reveals that two thirds of Australians want more information about how to recycle right and that three quarters want the Australasian Recycling Label (ARL) to be on all packaging.

**26%**

of consumers see regularly recycling as the most obvious way to help the environment.<sup>8</sup>

**64%**

of consumers want more information about what can and can't be recycled.<sup>8</sup>

**65%**

see brands and product producers as responsible for providing accurate packaging recycling information.<sup>8</sup>

**75%**

% of consumers are aware of the Australian Recycling Logo (ARL).<sup>8</sup>

# Embracing a Circular ECONOMY



## Making the most of valuable resources

For decades, the world has operated according to the linear economy model, which is based on the assumption that natural resources are abundant, easy to source, and cheap to discard.<sup>9</sup>

However, this approach is unsustainable, so many around the world are striving to achieve a circular economy instead. The circular model aims to maintain the utility of things we make, keeping materials in the loop instead of continuing to take-make-and-waste.<sup>10</sup>

In terms of packaging, the circular approach recognizes that every box, can, and jar we use is made from valuable resources. By reusing or recycling these materials, we can extend that value, putting them back to use while minimizing the environmental pressures involved in extracting resources, decreasing fossil fuels and emissions used in manufacturing, and reducing the amount of trash that ends up in landfills or the ocean.

It's important to note that the circular economy model is a means to an end, not an end in itself. By evaluating the life cycle of this approach, we can learn more about the consequences of implementing this model and determine which measures will lead to better environmental outcomes.

# Solutions from every angle

Evolving our approach to packaging is a combined effort, involving everything from educating consumers to expanding infrastructure to specifying how the materials in a product should be returned to the circular economy after use.<sup>11</sup>

## FIVE STEPS TOWARD KEEPING MATERIALS IN THE LOOP

### DID YOU KNOW?

The circular economy could yield up to \$4.5 trillion in economic benefits by 2030.<sup>12</sup> It could also reduce 80% of end-of-life plastic disposal by 2050 compared to today.<sup>13</sup>

LESS  
PACKAGING



### Reduce

Reducing use of packaging material in general, and virgin plastic in particular, while maintaining adequate protection.



### Reuse & Refill

Scaling reusable and refillable systems to eliminate the need for disposable packaging

BETTER  
PACKAGING



### Redesign

Pioneering alternative packaging materials to facilitate recycling

BETTER  
SYSTEMS



### Recycle

Supporting infrastructure that helps shape a waste-free future



### Rethink Behaviours

Driving new behaviours of companies, organisations and consumers

Each of these steps can go a long way toward preventing waste, but to capture the full value of the materials we use, we'll need everyone to commit to meeting these goals.

# Food and beverage packaging comes in many materials and formats, and most of them can be recycled

*Check your local council or waste services provider, regarding recyclability of these materials*



## PLASTIC BOTTLES

Water, beverages



## PAPER/ CARDBOARD

Fresh produce, outer packs



## MONOMATERIAL PLASTICS

Snacks



## GLASS

Beverages, condiments, produce



## STEEL

Fruits and vegetables, ready-to-eat meals, sauces



## ALUMINIUM

Prepared meals

## HOW TO RECYCLE RIGHT

Australians and New Zealanders care about the environment and want to do the right thing. But with hundreds of recycling labels out there, getting recycling right can be confusing.

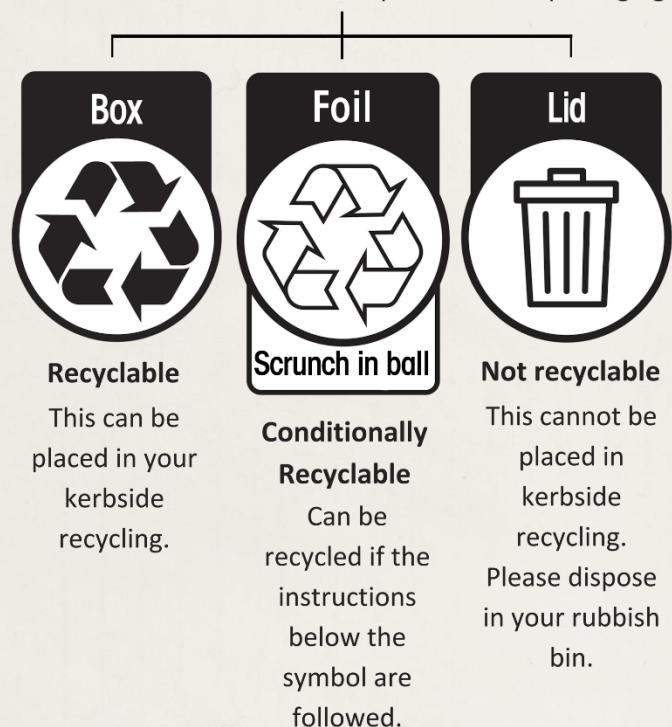
The Australasian Recycling Label (ARL) takes the confusion out of recycling product packaging by providing easy to understand instructions about how to correctly dispose of all parts of a product's packaging.

By ensuring that the right packaging ends up in the right bin, we can reduce the contamination in our waste stream and keep valuable recyclable material out of landfill.<sup>14</sup>

### Australasian Recycling Label

#### Package Component

This refers to an individual component of the packaging.





# TAKING *action*

As a food service provider, you have many opportunities to address packaging sustainability. Whether you're partnering with vendors, taking deliveries, preparing food, serving it or packing it for delivery, here are some more sustainable options to consider.

## LOADING DOCK & ORDERING

- Choose products with recycled or recyclable packaging.
- Ask vendors to minimize packaging when possible.
- Suggest reusable plastic or wooden pallets or trays to transport and store.
- Offer to return pallets/ containers to be refilled/ reused/recycled.
- Switch to products packed in alternative formats to minimise the amount of plastic use.
- Avoid single-use plastic items and beware of single-use plastic bans in your state or territory.
- When possible, try to order in bulk to minimize packaging (as long as you can use it all in time to prevent spoilage and food waste).
- Ask your suppliers about the availability of reuse systems or bulk dispensers.
- Order products that fit your local recycling facilities .
- Opt for local produce using less protection to travel.
- Ask vendors to optimise plastic pallet wrapping.



## KITCHEN PREP

- Reuse containers you usually have in the kitchen.
- Flatten cardboard/paper before recycling it.
- Ensure that there's no food left in empty containers to avoid waste contamination.
- Sort packaging waste into dedicated bins in the kitchen to avoid it going to landfill.
- Don't wrap items in plastic before placing them in recycling bin.





# We're in this together

Moving to a circular economy can benefit all of us, and if we hope to reach that goal, we need to act on it together. Our industry can be part of the packaging solution, and there's no time like the present to begin.

## DINING ROOM

- Label bins according to the sorting guidelines of local collection systems.
- Provide collection bins at convenient points with instructions for customers.
- Offer only reusable or paper straws.
- Replace disposables with ceramic mugs, plates and cutlery that can be washed and reused.
- Use empty jars to hold fresh cut flowers or candles on tables.

## RECYCLING SCHEMES

- Recycling prevents materials from going to waste in landfill and reduces our use of energy and water and the need to extract new materials from the earth.
- Consider recycling bottles, and cans, using a Container Deposit Scheme (CDS) to receive a refund per container recycled.
- Every state and territory in Australia have or will soon have a CDS.
- Containers recycled through CDS are turned into better quality products than those recycled through co-mingled recycling services.
- Originally created to reduce litter, container deposit schemes have far-reaching environmental, financial and social benefits.
- Find out more <https://recyclingnearyou.com.au/containerdeposit/><sup>15</sup>



## TAKEAWAY AND DELIVERY

- Encourage consumers to bring their own reusable cups or containers for takeaways.
- Offer multiple-use cups or containers and a refill discount for using them.
- Avoid single-use plastic items and beware of single-use plastic bans in your state or territory.
- Choose recyclable or recycled content items when multiple-use items are not feasible.
- Provide napkins, portioned condiments, cutlery, cup lids and sugar sachets only upon request.
- Include a card or sticker with delivery to explain how to recycle containers.
- Partner with a third party to reuse/recycle containers.
- Supply straws made from bamboo, stainless steel, or silicone. Only provide a straw on request.
- Use paper instead of plastic bags for carry-out and invite customers to use their own totes.
- Use cutlery made from stainless steel, bamboo or heavyweight plastic that can be reused.

# Everyday

## Q&A

### Are recyclable and recycled the same thing?

No. "Recyclable" is a characteristic of a product, packaging or associated component that can be diverted from the waste stream through available processes and programs and can be collected, processed and returned to use in the form of raw materials or products. On the other hand, "recycled material" means that something has been reprocessed from recovered material through a manufacturing process and made into a final product or component for incorporation into a product.<sup>16</sup>

### What is compostable packaging?

There are two types of compostable packaging.

**Industrial composting** refers to packaging that will biologically decompose and disintegrate in a commercial composting facility only. The composting process must be at set levels and within a defined period of time.

Industrial composting facilities treat the packaging with special environmental conditions to encourage the breakdown of the material where it will become organic rich soil that can be on sold.

Although this option has potential, industrial composting infrastructure is not yet widespread, which means that industrial composting is currently not accessible to the majority of the population.

Look for the *Seedling Composting* logo to identify and differentiate packaging materials suitable for industrial composting. And check with your local government, or their waste management partner to confirm if any compostables beyond food waste are accepted in your area.

**Home composting** refers to packaging that can be placed in a home compost bin where it will decompose and become organic rich soil, within a measured period of time.

Packaging that is home compostable should mean that every component and material used in the packaging will breakdown and decompose into organic soil. This includes the whole of the package; the printing ink, and the adhesives used to seal the package.

Choosing home compostable packaging for your business allows your consumers to compost the packaging in their home, which helps the circular economy. Look for the *Home Composting Logo* to ensure the certified packaging can be easily separated out and diverted from landfill.<sup>17</sup>



### What do single use plastics bans mean in Australia and New Zealand?

In both countries single-use plastic items are being banned or phased out in coming years. The timeframe and list of banned items is different for each country, state and territory and it's important you know what the single-use plastics ban means for your business.

- To find out more about what's happening in your local area or state in Australia, please check the website: <https://www.nra.net.au/policy-advocacy/action-on-single-use-plastics/><sup>18</sup>
- To find out what's happening in New Zealand, please check the website <https://environment.govt.nz/what-government-is-doing/areas-of-work/waste/plastic-phase-out/><sup>19</sup>

Some popular examples of single-use plastics that are or will be banned are below:

- plastic bags
- plastic drinking straws
- plastic bowls and plates
- plastic cutlery (including knives, forks, spoons, chopsticks, sporks, stirrers, food picks)
- expanded polystyrene food and drink containers
- products containing microbeads.

### What are the alternatives to single-use plastics?

There are many reusable options or alternative single-use items that you can provide in your business, such as:

- Cutlery made from stainless steel, bamboo or heavyweight plastic that can be washed and reused.
- Accepting reusable glass, heavyweight plastic, or metal containers/cups that a customer can bring in.
- Supply straws made from bamboo, stainless steel, or silicone. Only provide a straw on request.

### What's the best choice you can make in selecting packaging materials with respect to circularity?

The best choice will depend upon your business and the infrastructure available. You can explore reuse systems provided by your suppliers to significantly lower the volumes of single use materials you are using. Delivery pallets, vegetable trays and water fountain jugs are great examples of reusable packaging systems, and many more will be available due to consumer and regulatory initiatives to transform the packaging system. You can also check with your local government about what's locally collected and actually recycled. Remember, packaging should also deliver adequate protection to the product so it can minimise food losses and waste, as these can cause even more environmental impact than packaging itself..

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## TAKE A DEEPER LOOK:

### New Plastics Economy

<https://ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/the-new-plastics-economy-rethinking-the-future-of-plastics>

### Global Plastic Action Partnership

<https://www.globalplasticaction.org/>

### The Language of Climate Change: A Glossary of Terms

<https://www.nestleprofessional.com/news/language-climate-change-glossary-terms>

### Plastics PACTS

<https://ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/the-plastics-pact-network>

## Planetpro Issues

**No Time to Waste**  
*The Restaurant's Role  
in Reducing Trash*

**Climate Change**  
*How food service can  
contribute to the solution*

**Keep Packaging  
in the Loop**  
*Embracing a Circular Economy*



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