

Over Packaged?

The Packaging Optimisation Newsletter

7

Publication of a new guide to packaging

A booklet to help councils, waste management firms and packaging producers communicate consistent messages about packaging waste and recycling has been published by the Packaging Resources Action Group (PRAG).

Entitled 'Partnership and Packaging: Working together to optimise environmental performance', the document stresses that everyone, including manufacturers and retailers, want as little packaging as possible, but that some is "essential" to protect products and prevent further waste. It also explains why councils cannot recycle every kind of packaging waste.

It has been developed by PRAG - a UK-based cross-sector group including representatives from local and central government, manufacturers and retailers and waste management companies - in a bid to stop blame for the waste being pinned on groups such as retailers or councils, as it has been in the past.

Jane Bickerstaffe, director of the Industry Council for Packaging and the Environment (INCPEN) and member of PRAG, said: "There has been a tendency in the last few years for some of the mainstream media to shout at retailers and councils in particular as they are the ones in the firing line. But we all want the same things.

"One of the things which came out early on is that we suffer from inconsistent information. We wanted to identify some key messages and take the kind of questions that councils and retailers regularly get asked by the public."

Some of the topics raised in the guide include:

The materials and energy used to make a product are typically ten times greater than the resources used to make its packaging.

An average household buys 4,000 products per year weighing 3 tonnes.

Less than 200kg of packaging prevents these resources from ending up as waste.



Households generate far more food & drink waste (8.3 million Tonnes pa) than used packaging (4.7 million Tonnes). Almost half (44%) of this packaging is collected for recycling.

Even greater amounts of food go to waste in countries which don't have the UK's efficient distribution and packaging systems; in Russia over 40% is wasted. In the UK only 2% is wasted between farm and retail depot.

On its journey from farm or factory a product may have to survive extreme temperatures and even be dropped. Packaging has to protect it from these hazards.

The guide also includes a list of common questions faced by retailers and councils about packaging - such as why so much is needed and why councils collect different materials at the kerbside - and endeavours to provide straightforward answers. For more information visit www.incpen.org

If you wish to download a copy please visit: www.preventandsave.ie/Guides&Reports.html and click on the relevant link.