

Sustainable Packaging Report: **The case for paper**





What's in this report

This report explores the advantages of choosing certified paper as a packaging material choice, the applications it's appropriate for, and examples of paper packaging innovations. It also provides information on how to source certified paper packaging.

This is a report for any business or packaging manufacturer looking for inspiration on what's possible within the paper packaging sector.

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Front cover image: GWP Group Image on this page: Riverford Organic Farmers







Introduction

There's a growing awareness that the world is facing a packaging crisis. Urgent action is required across the board to reduce overall packaging use and to secure a future that's free from plastic pollution. Individuals, businesses, governments, public bodies, and non-governmental organisations all need to work together to find innovative solutions.

Businesses are faced with a range of options when it comes to packaging, but it's difficult to know what to choose and why. Functionality and cost are always front of mind, but there's a need to factor in sustainability considerations as well. These include the material source and how it's manufactured, its transportation footprint, and the end of life options within the existing infrastructure. Thought should also be given to potential negative externalities, for example: will the packaging damage or reduce the productivity of natural ecosystems if it escapes collection systems? Of course, the starting point should always be to determine if packaging is even necessary at all!

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed many things, including packaging design and considerations. Indeed, McKinsey believe packaging companies must rethink packaging design beyond 'must-haves,' and that three

major requirements must be addressed: first, a good sustainability narrative; second, design with hygiene in mind, given recent heightened consumer-safety concerns; and third, design for e-commerce, ship-ready design, and direct-toconsumer models.1

One thing that's remained a constant is the demand for sustainable packaging. A recent survey of over 1,000 UK adults has shown that environmentally-friendly packaging remains a priority, and that sustainability concerns have actually increased during the COVID-19 pandemic.² Unrecyclable packaging was seen as the biggest concern, followed closely by excessive packaging.³

Despite the fact that packaging has been seen as more important during the pandemic from a food safety perspective, paper has actually come out on top in terms of being thought of as the safest material.⁴ Research from the World

40% 30% 20% 10% Plastic packaging Paper packaging Metal packaging No packaging I don't see any difference in safety

Which of the following do you see as the safest in COVID-19?

https://www.thegrocer.co.uk/plastic/germ-phobia-versus-green-intentions-attitudes-to-sustainable-packaging-in-covid/648943.article

Health Organisation (WHO) suggests that the risk relating to COVID-19 transmission from surfaces is relatively low, particularly from FMCGs and parcels.⁵ A recent study showed the varying stability of the coronavirus on different surfaces - cardboard had one of the lowest levels of transmission, presumably because of its porous nature.6

With demand for paper packaging growing, it's a great packaging option for businesses to consider, especially when it also has such strong sustainability credentials.

Why choose paper packaging?

Paper packaging can protect goods, provide product information, and be both biodegradable and easily recyclable. Forestsourced fibre can also be used to make cellulose-based plastics and films. This type of material offers many advantages as a packaging choice, for example:

It's from a renewable source

Unlike some other packaging materials, paper is sourced from a renewable resource: trees. The majority of globally produced paper comes from 'production forests' - fast growing wood growing operations with harvesting cycles of as little as 5-10 years in the tropics, to 35-40 years in temperate climates. Certified plantations are examples of sustainable forest management (SFM) and are guaranteed not to have been converted from natural forests. SFM provides timber and wood fibre to a wide range of industries, which are the core materials



The forests that paper packaging come from make positive contributions to the world as beautiful landscapes, places to visit and enjoy, places for wildlife to thrive, protecting soil and water, and as carbon sinks to combat climate change. This report explores what advantages certified paper and packaging offers as a material choice, the applications it's appropriate for, and examples of packaging innovations and applications for businesses. It also provides information on how to source certified paper packaging.



for a circular economy. Certified plantations capture carbon from the atmosphere and lock it into products, from buildings and furniture, to the raw fibre for the paper and packaging manufacturers. Trees capture carbon through photosynthesis, and in turn produce oxygen as a waste by-product.

However, renewable becomes irrelevant if the paper is coming from global deforestation - one of the major contributors to climate change and loss of wildlife habitat. It's estimated that 15% of all greenhouse gas emissions are the result of deforestation.⁷ Choosing certified sources, such as those discussed later in this report, can help to ensure packaging comes from trees that have been grown and harvested responsibly, for example: certified forests must take into consideration high conservation values (HCV) and plan accordingly to ensure activity in forests does not have a negative impact on biodiversity.

¹ https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/paper-forest-products-and-packaging/our-insights/beyond-covid-19-the-next-normal-for-packaging-design#

² https://www.thegrocer.co.uk/plastic/germ-phobia-versus-green-intentions-attitudes-to-sustainable-packaging-in-covid/648943.article ³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/question-and-answers-hub/q-a-detail/q-a-coronaviruses ⁶ https://www.niaid.nih.gov/news-events/new-coronavirus-stable-hours-surfaces ⁷ Smith et al. 2014



As well as acting as a carbon sink, forests provide a range of ecosystem services. It's estimated that 1.6 billion people rely on the benefits forests offer, including food, fresh water, clothing, traditional medicine and shelter. Although forest plantations don't have the qualities of a natural forest, they can ensure good working conditions for local people and encourage room for indigenous trees, wetlands and natural structures within the area. This is more likely to be the case in certified forests, which incentivises the restoration and conservation of forest ecosystem services, such as biodiversity,

carbon, water, soil and recreation. Certification also helps to protect workers' rights and ensure inclusive consultations before commencing activities, as well as on-going impact monitoring.

It's the most recycled material

Paper packaging is widely recycled globally and is collected at a household level, enabling citizens to feel involved in tackling waste. The UK recycling rate for paper is 79%, the highest recycling rate of any material.



Packaging recycling, split by material, UK 2017 (DEFRA)

It doesn't pollute the environment

If paper packaging does escape the waste recycling system, it won't persist in the environment, as it's biodegradable. The time it takes to biodegrade varies, depending on a number of environmental factors, for example: corrugated cardboard may decompose in as little as three months, if broken down into pieces and home composted. Even in a drier and sterile environment, prolonged contact with microorganisms will eventually result in decomposition. Other common packaging materials such as aluminium, glass and plastic can take considerably longer to biodegrade and pose a threat to wildlife.



How long packaging takes to decompose



https://www.rd.com/list/everyday-items-longest-decompose/ https://www.dailysabah.com/feature/2019/01/23/nature-cant-do-it-all-how-long-does-it-take-for-our-waste-to-decompose

Why choose certified packaging?

Paper and card made with forest fibres are a popular choice for packaging materials. However, such materials can also be the product of deforestation or poor forestry practices; a threat not only to the world's forests, but also to business and brand reputation. Choosing certified materials helps to ensure the positive externalities associated with paper packaging are realised, securing a long-term source of paper and card, as well as demonstrating a commitment to responsible forestry to customers.

Worldwide, there are two internationally recognised systems for the certification of sustainable forestry management and its supply chain - the Forest Stewardship Council[®] and the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification[™]. While PEFC[™] and FSC[®] share the same goals, they choose different routes to get there.

Both FSC and PEFC operate a chain of custody process that traces material through the supply chain, from the forest to the end user, in a robust and transparent way.







In practice, this means that when a product or packaging bears the FSC or PEFC logo, customers are assured that it has been made with material from responsible sources. FSC and PEFC both apply rules for the use of their labels with a logo on products.



What is **PEFC** certified packaging?

PEFC is an umbrella organisation and mutual recognition scheme of national standards – e.g. UK Woodland Assurance Standard in the UK or the USA's Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI). Any national certification system seeking to obtain PEFC endorsement must submit to a comprehensive and rigorous assessment process, including independent evaluation and public consultation, to ensure it complies with the internationally recognised PEFC International Benchmarks. PEFC recognises two labels to be used on certified products: the Certified and Recycled labels.

Find out more on the PEFC website.

What is FSC certified packaging?

FSC works to take care of the world's forests for future generations – to help ensure we have Forests For All Forever. The FSC forest management standards are developed through broad stakeholder engagement and set requirements for responsible forest management. Responsible forest management, as promoted by FSC, maintains and enhances biodiversity and ecological processes. It aims to protect the rights of workers, communities, and Indigenous Peoples, while respecting the economic viability of forest management operations. FSC recognises three labels to be used on certified products: 100%, Mix and Recycled. FSC Mix can be used on a certified product if at least 70% of the material comes from FSC-certified forests, recycled materials, and other controlled sources. Find out more on the FSC website.

When can I use certified paper packaging?

Whether you source printed or non-printed customer facing packaging, or transport packaging, there are plenty of certified options available. Certified packaging products include, but are not limited to: wooden and composite pallets; solid-timber and plywood packing cases and crates; cardboard and corrugated paper, and paper bags; sleeves, boxes, cartons and labels. There are even certified cork closures for wine and champagne. The card and paper packaging industry is constantly innovating, and brands are finding new ways of using this to their advantage, which we'll explore further in the next section.



Innovations in Paper and Fibre Based Packaging

Written by Tom Hallam of Brand Ethics



Tom Hallam is the Owner of Brand Ethics Limited, a consultancy which helps Brand Owners and Retailers reduce the environmental impact of their packaging portfolios. Tom has >20 years of experience in the Consumer Goods and Forest Products sectors from his time with BillerudKorsnäs. DS Smith, UPM and Reckitt Benckiser.

www.brand-ethics.com

To understand the packaging needs of the modern consumer we must consider their lifestyle traits. Most people in the 21-65 age bracket could be described as "cash rich and time poor" – a combination which has led to a huge increase in the consumption of convenience products, particularly in the Food & Beverage sector. This has led to the exponential growth in plastic packaging.

¹ https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal12



To help counter this alarming trend a number of International Organisations have set out guidelines to help the key stakeholders operate in a more sustainable manner. Good examples of this are the Circular Economy framework provided by the The Ellen MacArthur Foundation and section 12 "Ensure Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns" of the UN's Sustainability Development Goals.¹ We need to ensure that all new products, and packaging, incorporate "eco design" in their development. This means responsible sourcing of all raw materials, using low carbon production processes/logistics and prioritising reuse as the preferred end of life solution (without compromising recyclability). Certification, at each stage of the Supply Chain, will help ensure that a Brand Owner/Retailer's approach to achieving these goals is robust.

So what is the Forest Products industry waiting for? A number of obstacles exist. Plastic packaging is easy to produce and is unrealistically cheap - the "externalities" of plastic production and use are not reflected in taxation. "End of life" is also difficult to tackle in the UK due to the incredibly fragmented collection and recycling infrastructure. Also consider that the development of a truly new fibre based innovation will typically involve 3 stakeholders (a Raw Material Supplier, Machine Manufacturer and a Brand Owner) and can take 3-5 years to bring to the market.

Despite these challenges the innovations below, all of which can be supplied with certification, demonstrate that we can substitute unnecessary plastics with fibre based alternatives:







Shaped Paper Pods

At the 2020 Packaging Europe Sustainability Awards, Syntegon were announced as the winner in the Machinery category for their work with formable paper on their TPU 1000 machine. Their partnership with BillerudKorsnäs means that 3D paper based portion packs (up to 100ml) can be produced using FibreForm. This packaging is a direct substitute for existing plastic packs in the food and cosmetics sectors and can be used for a wide variety of single-serving applications such as moisturisers, confectionery, margarine or ketchup/sauces.

Simon Johansson, project lead at BillerudKorsnäs commented "We're by the side of the customer from day one to successful product launch in our proof of concept projects – from idea to shelf in three steps. "We develop a completely customised solution regarding design, functionality and barrier properties which we then prototype and test in trial runs on the machine at the factory in Waiblingen"

Formed Fibre Based Food Trays

Launched in October 2020 by Iggesund Paperboard is Inverform, a formed paper based tray for all types of food application. At present the tray is manufactured using 330gsm paper with a 40gsm PET barrier but by Q1 2021 other variants will be available.

Hein van den Reek, Director of New Business, Iggesund Paperboard said "We will enter the market of food trays with Inverform. Today this uses a PET layer, the next step is to apply a biobased barrier and the step beyond that will be thin bio-based dispersion barriers"



PureFiber by Stora Enso is a new selection of formed fibre products helping customers to replace plastics in the Food Service segment. Formed fibre products are food contact approved and can either be recycled or composted after use. Products using PureFiber enable CO² footprint savings of 75% compared to alternative packaging materials, such as plastic or bagasse.

E-Commerce Mailing Bags

One of the breakthrough paper packaging innovations in 2020 was the mainstream commercialisation of fibre based e-commerce mailing bags.

It is estimated that there are a staggering 50 billion plastic mailing bags used globally each year, a problem compounded by a lack of a collection and recycling infrastructure for plastic films. Add to this e-commerce sales growth of 15-20% per annum, and the need for a sustainable substitute is clear.



There are two main substrate options available to brand owners for this application, both available with forest certification. Paptic is the premium offer in this market – a material that imitates the functional benefits of plastic but it is made from renewable raw materials. Paptic offers water resistance and can be reused many times but is also recyclable with paper and board. Mailing bags can now also be manufactured using strong and durable paper grades from a variety of suppliers thanks to developments in machinery and paper quality.



E-Commerce Transit Packaging

Flexi-Hex is a great example of how plastic can be substituted without loss in performance. The product is simple, requires no barrier and has clear and measurable environmental benefits.

Sam Boex, Co-Owner Flexi-Hex says "Flexi-Hex creates relatively simple packaging solutions that are 100% plastic free and recyclable.



All their products are made from FSC Certified paper and over 85% recycled paper pulp. Our patented sleeves are made from a honeycomb paper structure that simply slots over and wraps around fragile products thanks to its malleable nature, creating an incredibly strong layer of protection"



Sustainable Labels

Labels are often overlooked by those wanting to reduce the impact of their packaging. UPM Raflatac is one of the pioneers of this market segment and their recent innovations reflect this.

RAFNXT+ paper label materials are sourced from sustainably managed FSC certified forests and use less raw materials, energy and water, and generate less waste during their lifecycle compared to standard labels. The resulting CO² reduction has been verified by the Carbon Trust.

UPM Raflatac Forest Film PE wood based Polyethylene labels are the result of a collaboration between UPM Bioverno and Dow Chemical and are considered to be the World's first PE label produced uniquely from renewable resources. The labels come with International Sustainability & Carbon Certification (ISSC Plus) as standard.



Selfridges & James Cropper PLC

From beans to bags - creating an upcycled product with a closed-loop waste cycle

The iconic yellow branding for Selfridges, the famous UK department store, is instantly recognisable - nothing personifies this more than their paper shopping bags. As part of Project Ocean, which launched in 2011, Selfridges made a commitment to tackle plastic pollution and marine conservation by removing unnecessary or problematic plastic from their packaging.

Paper is often the preferred alternative but not without considering the impact of this material. Where possible opting for paper from recycled sources or from FSC certified non Ancient and non-endangered responsibly managed forests within their shopping bags and wider packaging. Selfridges is constantly looking for ways to make their business more sustainable and welcomes innovation to solve problems

The problem: Coffee cups used by staff (despite of course encouraging and incentivising reusable containers) are often not kerbside recyclable due to a laminated lining.

The solution

In 2017 Selfridges approached manufacturer, James Cropper, who created a process that upcycles the waste coffee cups collected from Selfridges employees into paper.

The recycled pulp from the cups that cannot be recycled at kerbside now makes up 20% of Selfridges 's Kraft shopping bags which reduces the amount of virgin material used in their packaging. Having dedicated cup recycling bins in their sites, increases the company's recycling rate. Furthermore the paper in the Kraft bags is widely recycled at kerbside.

Streamlining 'end of life' solutions

The circular design principles put the endof-life of their packaging at the forefront of product development decision making. While packaging that's made up of different components often has multiple end-of-life disposal routes, the brand aims to use one material for all components, where possible, to avoid this - for example removing plastic windows from all food products.

Together with James Cropper, they've not only created a solution that means fewer virgin materials are used, they've also hugely reduced wastage of a single use product by introducing it back into the manufacturing stream. Selfridges Kraft yellow bags are one of their most iconic branding items, and that in itself has helped to make this one of the most memorable sustainability initiatives for their staff and customers.

Why FSC certification is important to Selfridges

Selfridges is committed to changing the way it does business and reinventing retail. As part of its sustainability initiative, Project Earth, Selfridges is putting sustainability and creativity at the heart of the business by exploring circular retail models, inspiring a shift in mindsets and addressing the materials it uses. By 2025, the most impactful materials used in every area of the business from shop-fits and packaging to branded products will come from certified, sustainable sources.

Read Selfridges' wood/paper commitment statement here.

Manufacturer: James Cropper PLC

James Cropper's world-first paper cup recycling process, CupCycling™, enables Selfridges to create elements of its iconic yellow Kraft shopping bags in a completely unique closedloop recycling solution. One large paper bag will contain the equivalent of an 8oz cup. The remaining paper fibre is taken from FSC certified responsibly managed forestry sources.

Product

The current makeup of the shopping bags replaces a 100% virgin paper alternative. Each bag displays the CupCycling™ logo, verifying that the waste fibre has been processed through James Cropper's recycling facility. After use, the bags can then be recycled in the standard paper waste stream.

James Cropper produces uncoated paper products, all manufactured without the addition of chemicals, which would present a hazard in use, or impair the ability to be recycled.

The manufacturer encourages their paper products to be recycled at the end-of-life stage to keep this valuable resource in the supply chain. They also provide clients with a life cycle analysis, showing the environmental impact of the various fibre options available to them.







Certification is no longer a differentiator; it's become the norm. The more we advance in sustainable products, and the more the mindset of our customers and the end consumer evolves, the more selective the demand becomes.

Julie Tomlinson, Marketing Communications Manager @ James Cropper

- One large bag contains 20% coffee cup waste = equivalent of one 8oz cup
- 80% of bag made of materials from FSC certified responsibly managed forestry sources

At Selfridges, we believe in the power of dynamic collisions – exciting partnerships with those who share our values and can work with us to make a difference.

Daniella Vega, Director of Sustainability



Riverford Organic Farmers & Verpackungszentrum (VPZ) GmbH

Using forestry co-products to deliver on environmental commitments

Produce home-delivery company, Riverford Organic aims to have little environmental impact with their packaging, while preserving product quality. In 2018, founder Guy Singh-Watson announced that the company would be reducing its plastic packaging as much as possible. Since then, they've released a <u>manifesto</u> that commits to all Riverford packed fruit and veg being in home compostable packaging by December 2020. Riverford's 3 most popular veg boxes were found to contain 82% less plastic packaging collectively when compared to representative packaged products across 7 UK supermarkets (Source: Savanta, 2019).

Climate change issues, like marine and land pollution and food waste, are really important to the brand. They've been using cardboard boxes for their deliveries for over 20 years, but when it came to reviewing their plastic netting to maintain product integrity inside their boxes, it was a natural switch to a compostable replacement. The change was also influenced by consistent customer feedback to reduce plastic, and the knowledge that a compostable netting made from waste products sat directly within the Riverford ethos on packaging: remove, reduce, reuse, recycle.

The solution

The nets are produced from a by-product of beech forestry in sustainable Austrian PEFC certified forests. When the trees grow to a certain height, some are thinned out to give the remaining trees space and light to grow. These thinnings would often go to woodfuel markets; instead, the manufacturer, Verpackungszentrum GmbH, chips and pulps them, spinning the output into a material similar to wool. Using compostable beech nets also reduces the risk of environmental harm from netted packaging. They're fully compostable providing the same product quality as the previous non-recyclable netting did - and create a closed-circuit by utilising a waste product that can then be composted.

Overcoming complications

Rigorous quality testing of new produce packaging is essential: the energy required to produce and transport food to customers is significant. Therefore, if poor quality or degradation causes food to be thrown away once it reaches customers, the carbon emissions can outweigh the benefits of a more sustainable packaging option.

Some production costs increased, as the netting is more expensive than plastic alternatives. It also took time to implement the beech netting correctly, for example: getting the netting to work on existing equipment and staff training staff for the new product. However, the environmental, marketing and customer satisfaction benefits have all been worth it.

Why PEFC certification is important to Riverford Organic

Riverford Organic works hard to ensure that the raw materials used for their food packaging come from sources that have as minimal an environmental impact as possible. Buying from FSC and PEFC sources supports responsible forest management and minimises the risk of purchasing forestry products from illegal logging and the degradation of forest ecosystems.



Using waste wood products for packaging allows for huge reductions in non-renewable materials usage and contributes to local and regional circular economy initiatives.

Zac Goodall, Sustainability and Ethics manager @ Riverford Organic Farmers

Manufacturer: Verpackungszentrum (VPZ) GmbH

Nearly 10 years ago VPZ decided to develop an alternative to the 30,000 tonnes of plastic netting used per year for fruit and vegetables in the EU alone. The outcome was the Packnatur® cellulose tube netting.

Product

The raw material used in Packnatur® cellulose tube netting is beech wood, which is recovered from certified beech forests in Austria and neighbouring countries. Forest thinning is a standard process in the industry, and is required to provide enough light and space for surrounding trees.

This wood is transformed into modal fibres by Lenzing AG – the global market leader in the environmentally friendly manufacture of cellulose fibre – using carbonneutral processes, in line with the strictest environmental standards.

The production of raw materials does not compete with the production of food, and avoids the need for irrigation or the use of chemicals on farmland. Beech forests regenerate naturally without the need for intense forest cultivation, as plantations would require.





- Packnatur® netting is biodegradable and HOME COMPOST-certified in Europe and the USA
- The Higg Materials sustainability index suggests the LENZING[™] modal fibres used in Packnatur® require far less resources than conventional materials
- Riverford's veg boxes contain 82% less plastic than equivalent packaged products from major UK supermarkets

The first question we asked ourselves was: What happens if the material is not disposed of as it was intended to be? In the case of Packnatur® tube netting, the answer is easy: it is biodegradable, as well as compostable, and will therefore never harm the environment, no matter where it lands.

Magdalena Smoliner, Product Management @ Verpackungszentrum GmbH



Garnier & Albéa Group

Mass market beauty brand takes giant step on packaging

Global beauty brand, Garnier, recently launched the first generation of cosmetic tubes that integrates FSC certified cardboard in their packaging within their organic skincare line. This is one of a number of actions within Garnier's 'Green Beauty Initiative': an end-to-end approach to sustainability that aims to radically reduce the environmental impact of their value chain.

Garnier's green beauty strategy is based on 5 progress areas: eco-designed packaging and formulas, sustainable factories and sourcing, and supporting initiatives working towards a greener planet. Some of the key pillars of this strategy include reducing the weight and size of packaging, and innovating to create entirely plastic-free packaging.

The solution

Working closely with their manufacturer, Albéa Group, Garnier co-developed the first cosmetic tube that replaces part of the plastic with paperbased, FSC certified material. While creating this alternative, the brand also took the opportunity to reduce the cap size, removing plastic usage even further, reducing the plastic per tube by 49% compared to their previous packaging. The packaging is also 29% lighter, which has resulted in reductions of impact, including CO2 from transporting the products.

Overcoming challenges

Garnier aims to bring more sustainable, naturally derived beauty to the mass market at affordable prices. Innovation such as this can be a challenge in itself, but they endeavor to stay true to their purpose, while radically reducing their environmental impact in offering customers more sustainable choices.

The brand has performed comparative life cycle analyses (LCAs) on their new packaging solution, and the first results show good environmental benefits, and a reduction in CO2 emissions compared to their former Garnier Organic 50ml tube.

Current cosmetic tubes made from plastic are not recyclable via mainstream methods in the UK therefore this launch is a major breakthrough in reducing the plastic usage, the weight of the product and ensuring Garnier are maintaining a good customer experience and protecting the formula. Garnier's innovation teams are currently working on leveraging the amount of cardboard to make the packaging recyclable, as well as integrating post-consumer recycled plastic in the tube as it is their ambition to transition all of their plastic packaging to be reusable, recyclable or compostable by 2025.

Why FSC certification is important to Garnier

Using certified cardboard is part of Garnier's Green Beauty commitments: 100% of their cardboard boxes and paper products have a responsibly managed forest certification, such as FSC, and they won't compromise on this.

COVID-19 has reinforced their motivations, as well as a consumer demand for a greener and healthier planet. Today, our world faces distinct challenges, and consumers are increasingly changing their behaviour, becoming more conscious of the need to protect the environment, and preserve natural resources for future generations. Garnier sees themselves as having an opportunity to make a real impact, helping to create access to sustainable beauty for all.

We believe in the pressing need to shift from a linear approach, whereby companies 'take, make and dispose' of natural resources, to a more circular, regenerative economy.

Aurélie Weinling, Garnier International Scientific & Sustainability Director



Manufacturer: Albéa Group

Albéa Group is one of the world's largest cosmetic packaging wholesalers, manufacturing solutions for many well known brands. They're committed to responsible packaging and sustainability, as well as reducing their environmental impacts, and using FSC certified materials is one of the ways they're working to achieve these commitments.

Product

One of the pillars of Albéa Group's circular manufacturing strategy is to include more post-consumer-recycled (PCR) or bio-based material in their packaging. Fueled by Garnier's strategies, and their own ambitions, this breakthrough packaging innovation incorporates sustainably sourced certified cardboard in the tube's laminate web, aligning with the 'less plastic' trend sweeping the globe.

Using certified materials was a key point of focus during the development process. Looking at all the aspects of the product lifecycle - from raw material to end of life - they used a proprietary life cycle analysis (LCA) tool to measure packaging impact, assess the recyclability of the materials, while the right level of protection, performance and desirability.

The demand for responsible packaging has increased exponentially over the past 3 years. People's personal impact on the planet is now a major concern for all of their stakeholders. As such, the market success of this cosmetic tube solution has generated much interest from other brands, both in the beauty industry and others.





- Garnier's first generation integrated FSC certified cardboard cosmetic tube, with a lighter cap, has reduced the plastic per tube by 49%
- The packaging is also 29% lighter, which has resulted in reductions of impact, including CO2 from transporting the products

We believe that cosmetic packaging can be both desirable and sustainable. There can be no responsible packaging without a responsible company, and our transparency and traceability are part of that wider ambition.

Caroline Hughes, Director of Marketing @ Albéa Group



Alara Wholefoods & Protos Packaging

Prioritising consumer demand for eco-conscious packaging

Alara Wholefoods are specialists in producing organic cereals and are credited as the world's first plastic free cereal brand. They've spent 30 years working on ways to make their products as eco-friendly as possible, creating their Four Pillars of Sustainability. For them, there was no other choice but to use paper or wood-based packaging.

One of the brand's most important goals was to be able to claim that their packaging is 100% plastic free, and that it could break down in an environmentally friendly way. As such, they wanted their customers to be able to choose their products knowing that their purchases wouldn't have a negative impact on the environment.

The solution

Both Alara's factory and their packaging are 'zero waste'. Their most recent innovation, for which they worked with Protos Packaging, is their biodegradable inner cereal bags. These bags may look like plastic, but the material is actually more like a specialist see-through paper, made up primarily of eucalyptus cellulose from certified forests. This new packaging will biodegrade in a home compost heap over 3 months, returning to the soil in a cyclical end of life process.

Their new packaging also meets three other stringent test areas, including disintegration, ecotoxicity and heavy metals content, which qualifies products as suitable for the TUB Austria 'plastic free' trust mark.

Overcoming complications

Despite a slight increase in cost for certified packaging, Alara believes you can't put a price on saving the planet. They're still able to sell their products at a competitive price, and the biggest benefit of the material is its end-of-life process, which allows it to be compostable. This is something that they've found to be a strong selling point for customers.

Occasionally, lead times for the materials can be lengthy, but Alara overcomes this with a great production and logistics team that work directly with Protos Packaging to plan well in advance. This forward thinking ensures they always have enough materials for the products they're currently producing.

Why FSC and PEFC certifications are important to Alara

Alara use FSC and PEFC certified materials for both their cardboard boxes and film in their cereal packaging. These certifications are very important to the brand because of the credibility they bring to their sustainability claims. Without these certifications, they felt they wouldn't be taken seriously. This also allows them to promote their 'plastic free' and 'home compostable' status. One of the main reasons they've discovered that people choose Alara products is because of its environmental image; using certified materials allows for further improvements to their processes with a credible backing. Compostable materials have grown in popularity, so our determination to offer as wide a range of products as possible is partly driven by customer demand, alongside our responsible attitude towards the environment

Max McKeague, Director @ Protos Packaging

Manufacturer: Protos Packaging

As an independent, privately-owned company with almost 30 years of industry experience, Protos Packaging strive to offer all their customers a viable alternative to traditional thermoplastic packing films, and now offer one of the widest ranges of bespoke flexible packaging products and services in the industry. To keep at the forefront of packaging innovations, and to offer competitive pricing to their customers, they're constantly adapting and improving their in-house conversion processes to suit these new materials.

Product

Protos Packaging imports, stocks and converts food grade flexible packaging films, such as biaxially-oriented and cast polypropylene, polyester, cellulose, laminates, polyolefins and biodegradables.

One of these materials is ProGanic-Cello: the 'holy grail' of environmentally-friendly packaging. This biodegradable film is manufactured primarily from eucalyptus wood pulp from certified forests. Its end-of-life cycle, which is suitable for home composting, is a major selling point to Protos Packaging's customers. When they started working with Alara about a year ago, Alara were already using a similar compostable material, but Protos Packaging were able to optimise the widths of material they were running to reduce waste and cost.



The long term impact of choosing sustainable packaging is worth so much more than any extra turnover businesses make now, by saving on less environmentally conscious alternatives.

Alex Smith, Founder @ Alara

- Alara packaging is 100% plastic free
- Alara's ProGanic-Cello inner cereal bags will biodegrade in a home compost heap over 3 months



Protega Global Ltd

Cushioning the rise of online shopping with low-impact sustainable packaging

Product

Protega Global Ltd is a sustainable paperbased packaging manufacturer. One of their innovations includes a machine that forms a 100% recyclable paper cushion from a folded paper roll, which protects goods whilst in transit to the end consumer.

Triple folded paper rolls are fed into a machine. which produces a cushioned paper pad that doesn't 'settle' in transit, offering more protection to the products it surrounds. With the growth of online shopping, and the rise of a returns culture, this solution is a welcome option over plastic alternatives, such as bubble wrap. It even consistently reduces breakages by 50% compared to plastic airbag alternatives. As a result, a significant number of online retailers have had the confidence to make the switch from plastic to paper this year.

The machine itself is compact and small enough to sit on a packing bench, if required, or can be mounted on a height-adjustable stand, enabling it to be integrated into packing lines for optimum efficiency.

Why FSC certification is important to Protega Global Ltd

Protega recently achieved FSC Chain of Custody certification with Soil Association Certification, as they have found that companies are clearly concerned that their paper packaging comes from sustainable and managed sources. They don't want the increase of paper use to harm the environment at the source; if it did, then you'd be causing one problem to solve another. FSC certification is vital to reassuring packaging users that they're buying paper packaging that comes from responsible sources.



Overcoming complications

Establishing the chain of custody from their limited supply chain has been a challenge for Protega. Having fewer sourcing options means they've had to work with suppliers to secure FSC certification, or pay a small premium to ensure materials are certified. However, there hasn't had to be a trade off between maintaining the sustainability credentials and fulfilling demand, on the whole.

Establishing the supply chain initially, and reviewing the risks on a regular basis helps to ensure continuity of the supply of sustainable paper-based packaging.





Abel & Cole & GWP Group (Corrboard)

Thinking outside the cardboard box for sustainable packaging solutions

As a company with sustainability at its heart, Abel & Cole made the decision to use cardboard as their packaging material when the business started 33 years ago. It's a light, yet sturdy material, and its impact on the weight of their deliveries is a high priority, as these properties help to minimise miles per gallon to industrybeating standards. With nationwide deliveries, the brand recognises that their packaging needs to be made of a material that can be recycled by any facility nationwide, in case they aren't able to collect it themselves.

Their delivery boxes can also be collected and re-used (they've recorded up to 8 re-uses). The re-use of the boxes is communicated to customers from the point of sign-up, and the brand regularly sends reminders to leave them out for drivers to pick up the following week. They also explain how this helps to minimise packaging use in these communications and on their website.

In addition, Abel & Cole recently added to their sustainable shopping initiatives by launching their Club Zero scheme, allowing members to buy pantry products in returnable containers and return and refill them along with their fresh produce deliveries.

Ensuring responsible sourcing

FSC certification reassures the brand that when they do need to source virgin packaging materials, they can do so sustainably, in line with their values of social and environmental stewardship. Despite purchasing FSC certified materials for their cardboard boxes since the company's inception in 1994, they wanted to prioritise full chain of custody certification to maintain the integrity in their packaging. Having a good relationship with their packaging manufacturer GWP, who were recently successful in achieving certification themselves, has been essential in achieving this.

Why FSC certification is important to Abel & Cole

Abel & Cole want to know that the materials they source – whether for their packaging, or simply for office supplies – are not further contributing to the grave effects of deforestation. FSC certification has a worldwide recognition, and Abel & Cole trust the organisation's work, which is why they choose to support it. Their customers recognise the logo and expect to see it on the products they sell, and as part of their compliance and due diligence, Abel & Cole also encourage their suppliers to use the FSC trademark to raise awareness about the organisation's good work.

As a company with sustainability at its heart, every decision is made with environmental responsibility in mind.

Marta Salva, Sustainability & Environmental Manager @ Abel & Cole

Manufacturer: GWP Group

Award-winning design and manufacturing group, GWP, create a wide range of packaging materials, focusing particularly on corrugated cardboard. They're part owners of Corrboard, which manufactures a fully FSC certified and sustainably sourced corrugated cardboard material. Corrboard also has the UK's first anaerobic digester plant – a sustainable energy generation facility which is fuelled by organic waste.

Product

Cardboard is a cost effective, yet durable packaging material that's perfect for lowfrequency trip applications across retail, industrial and e-commerce. All of the material used by Corrboard comes from FSC certified sources, so when a growing number of GWP's customers – including Abel & Cole – showed increasing interest in having their packaging FSC certified across the full chain of custody; , it made sense for the business to also undertake certification, especially as they place a strong emphasis on being as environmentally responsible as possible.

A large part of GWPs value proposition is our focus on the environment, and how we can help our customers to become greener as well.





GWP take a consultative, partnership approach for all of their customers, and look to build long term relationships with them. They strive to educate businesses on the long-term impacts and commercial opportunities of switching to fully paper-based packaging, as well as offering advice on recycling and end of life implications.





The way forward

Sustainable packaging is becoming ever more important on shoppers' priority lists, which in turn is forcing brands and retailers to rethink their packaging strategies.

FSC and PEFC certified paper, and woodfibre derived packaging benefits from strong environmental credentials, growing demand, and exciting innovations being introduced every year within the sector. This makes FSC and PEFC certified paper packaging an attractive option for businesses looking to lessen their operational impact on the environment and enables them to stay relevant among their customers and a growing wave of conscious-consumers.

So, where can businesses find certified paper packaging options?

Brands/retailers:

Hopefully this report has given you lots of inspiration and ideas on what's possible with paper packaging and reassure you that moving to paper alternatives doesn't mean compromising on quality and durability. Once you've found a paper or wood derived packaging alternative suitable for your business and product, make sure you source your packaging from an FSC or PEFC certified manufacturer and that they use certified materials, as companies can have a certificate, but also sell uncertified products. Packaging manufacturers are driven by their clients' needs, including when it comes to certifying their business, so don't be afraid to ask your current manufacturer to get certified, or else shop around.

Both PEFC and FSC have searchable databases which can help you find paper and wood fibre based packaging solutions:

info.fsc.org/certificate.php#result

https://www.pefc.org/find-certified?mode=simpl e&page=1&search=&search=



Packaging manufacturers:

Shoppers and brands are demanding certified paper packaging more and more, so if you're interested in exploring certification for your business, we can help. Rest assured that sufficient supplies of certified raw materials do exist, so be insistent with your supplier, if they say they can't source it.

To find out more about certification, or to contact the team, visit *soilassociation.org/forestry*

About Soil Association Certification Forestry

Soil Association Certification Forestry certify and inspect to many schemes worldwide, including the globally recognised and trusted FSC and PEFC. What makes our service special is the way we offer our certification services. We guarantee:

- Depth of expertise we have a long track record of delivering the highest standards of certification, including 20 years' FSC certification experience
- Flexibility we offer a wide range of certification and verification services, and will make sure you get what you need, whatever your sector or business
- You get unrivalled support and a personal service throughout the process – from a dedicated Certification Officer, to a team of technical experts and auditors
- You benefit from a range of practical solutions to improve efficiency and keep costs down
- We provide opportunites to develop your supply chain and reach new markets
- Corporate Social Responsibility as a trading subsidiary of a mission driven NGO, by certifying with us, you support our work promoting sustainable land management worldwide; we get involved with industry sectors and promote our client's products that support sustainable forest management through projects like this report!

Are you looking for certification?

Find out more at *soilassociation.org/forestry*

Soil Association Certification Forestry Worldwide:









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Get in touch

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