

Waste Reduction  
**CHALLENGE**

Packaging unwrapped



[www.recycleforgloucestershire.com](http://www.recycleforgloucestershire.com)



## Packaging unwrapped

We take home packaging nearly every time we shop and it is a very visible part of the products we buy.

We have produced this leaflet because we are often asked the question 'what is being done about excessive packaging?' This leaflet explains why packaging can have a positive role to play, and what is being done to reduce packaging waste wherever possible.

Packaging can often prevent food waste and in the UK every year we actually throw away more food from our homes than packaging, so we are just as focussed on reducing the amount of food waste produced in our county as we are on reducing packaging waste.

In many ways it's about getting the balance right, and ensuring products are only packaged for a good reason.

Do you agree? We are always pleased to get your views.

Please e-mail us your feedback to  
**waste@gloucestershire.gov.uk**



## Why do we have packaging?

Packaging ensures your shopping gets home in mint condition. It protects food and other goods on the journey from farm or factory via warehouses and shops until they arrive in the home.

Protecting products from damage is important because:

- When products are wasted all the energy and raw materials used to produce them also goes to waste.
- When food waste is sent to landfill it rots and produces greenhouse gases and contributes to climate change.

Thanks mainly to packaging...

97%

of food in the UK reaches the shop floor.

However, we throw away

8.3 million tonnes

of food every year from our homes.

Packaging also provides important information about the goods, ingredients used, nutritional values, where the product comes from and when it should be used by.



## Fact!

### Packaging means...

- Fruit and vegetables are available out of season
- Liquid, gels and powders are available
- Content information is available (ingredients/nutritional values etc)
- Food can be stored for significantly longer.

Packaging is a small proportion of our purchases. An average household buys 4000 products per year, which weighs around 3 tonnes, with packaging making up approximately 7% of the weight.

## Fact!



**Modern shopping habits mean most of us no longer shop daily for fresh goods, so packaging helps our food stay fresher for longer.**

In **2006** a voluntary agreement, called the Courtauld Commitment was agreed between Government and grocery manufacturers and retailers to reduce packaging and food waste. Since the agreement there has been successful progress to remove unnecessary packaging and make the remaining packaging lighter.

For example;  
At Easter 2009 all of the major brands reduced their Easter egg packaging by 30%. Further reductions were made in 2010 with more planned for the coming years.

Many retailers now import wine in bulk to be bottled using lighter bottles in the UK.

The use of concentrate based products in household items and squashes has increased. This uses less packaging for the same number of servings.

In April **2010** the **second phase** of the Courtauld Commitment was launched.

Targets include;

- reducing packaging weight further still
- Increasing the recycled content of packaging
- Increasing UK recycling rates
- Reduce UK household food and drink waste by 4%
- Reduce supply chain waste by 5%.

**The third phase** will look at lowering the carbon impact of products throughout their entire lifecycle.



# Love Food Hate Waste

Around 8.3 million tonnes of household food is wasted each year in the UK, most of which was edible. The environmental costs of food waste are enormous. We could prevent at least 20 million tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions each year if we stopped wasting food that could have been eaten.

## Good intentions are often hampered by...

- A lack of planning when food shopping – buying more than you need
- Not storing food properly
- A lack of confidence around cooking, reusing leftovers and portion control
- Confusion over food date labels (such as 'use by' and 'best before')

For recipes and how to get more from the food we buy, visit [www.lovefoodhatewaste.com](http://www.lovefoodhatewaste.com)

## Why can't all packaging be recycled?

For some types of packaging the technologies to collect and reprocess it are still in development.

For example, it isn't environmentally beneficial to recycle some packaging, such as lightweight mixed materials like crisp packets. This is because it currently uses more energy and resources to recycle these materials than we could recover from the process.

However, this sort of packaging often has benefits earlier in its life because it is lighter to transport, so fewer delivery lorries are needed, which saves transport pollution.



## Label Gazing

A number of major retailers have worked together to develop an on-pack label system that helps you to understand which packaging is recyclable. **Look out for these labels on packaging at various stores.**



SLEEVE

CARD  
widely  
recycled

means 65% or more of UK residents can recycle this item locally



TRAY

METAL  
check local  
recycling

means 15-65% of UK residents can recycle this item locally



FILM

PLASTIC  
not currently  
recycled

means less than 15% of UK residents can recycle this item locally

## Why isn't all packaging made from recycled materials?

The main challenges are around hygiene, availability and cost.

- Hygiene requirements can restrict the use of recycled material that comes into direct contact with food. For example, the recycling process needs to heat the material to a high enough temperature to ensure no contamination
- To produce recycled packaging, manufacturers need to have access to a large quantity of good quality recycled material. It's only cost-effective if it's available.

## Fact!

Manufacturers, retailers and recyclers are working to develop technologies and processes so that more packaging can be made from recycled materials.

## Low waste shopping tips

### We can all help, by reducing, reusing and recycling as much as we can



Using concentrates saves packaging – detergents, fabric conditioners and squash can all be bought in concentrated form. Buying items such as toilet roll and washing powder in bulk often saves on packaging.

Buy only as much food as you can use before the 'use by' date. Larger quantities of food can sometimes be split and frozen. Check [www.lovefoodhatewaste.com](http://www.lovefoodhatewaste.com) for food related tips and recipes.



Buy some food at the local farmers' markets held throughout the county. Visit [www.fresh-n-low.co.uk](http://www.fresh-n-low.co.uk) or [www.gloucestershirefarmersmarkets.org.uk](http://www.gloucestershirefarmersmarkets.org.uk) for details.

Use your local recycling services to recycle as much as you can. Your local household recycling centre is provided so that you can recycle an even larger range of materials. Visit [www.recycleforgloucestershire.com](http://www.recycleforgloucestershire.com) to find your nearest one.

**When buying loose fruit and veg, nature's own packaging is often all you need**

What do I do if I think a product is excessively packaged?



Contact the retailer or manufacturer direct, or visit

Consumer Direct  
[www.consumerdirect.gov.uk](http://www.consumerdirect.gov.uk) or call  
**08454 04 05 06**

Trading Standards  
[www.tradingstandards.gov.uk](http://www.tradingstandards.gov.uk)  
[tradstds@gloucestershire.gov.uk](mailto:tradstds@gloucestershire.gov.uk)

More information about packaging can be found at  
[www.incpen.org](http://www.incpen.org)  
[www.onpackrecyclinglabel.org.uk](http://www.onpackrecyclinglabel.org.uk)  
[www.recyclenow.com](http://www.recyclenow.com)  
[www.valpak.co.uk](http://www.valpak.co.uk)

[www.recycleforgloucestershire.com](http://www.recycleforgloucestershire.com)

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for Gloucestershire



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COUNTY COUNCIL