



PRESS RELEASE

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Packaging is not the enemy in War on Waste

The LGA's report - the third in its series on the theme of 'War on waste' is itself a wasted opportunity.

Worse than that, according to Jane Bickerstaffe, Director of INCPEN (The Industry Council for Packaging and the Environment): *"The report is naïve and shows a singular lack of knowledge of the modern supply chain and what it takes to feed a nation of 60 million.*

"Ranking retailers on 29 products is nonsense. It's not comparing like with like. Products have different supply chains and different amounts of transport packaging. Some products have a short shelf life, others are made to last longer. The amount of packaging has to reflect this."

The UK uses less packaging per head than many other major EU countries. UK 147 kg per person; Germany 158kg per person; France 162 kg per person. And around 85% of packaging is already recyclable.

Despite that high rate, and continued efforts by industry to lower its environmental impact, Jane Bickerstaffe advises:

"In the context of the larger challenge of climate change, packaging recycling is the wrong target. Recyclability is only one part of a product's environmental footprint, and not the most important one. Product wastage and energy use are much more important. If the product that's inside the packaging is wasted, that's the environmental disaster."

Food packaging has a vital job to do in these days of recession with shoppers feeling the pinch. Not least because it helps keep food costs low, and reduces wastage.

It takes a huge amount of resources, energy and water to produce food in the first place. It is imperative that this effort is not wasted and that food reaches us in good condition. It must be transported, warehoused, retailed and then transported again and stored at home in the fridge, freezer or cupboard until we are ready to use it. On average there are ten times more resources and energy in food than in its packaging.

Many authorities, including the UK Government, are already stating that food waste is a major environmental problem - discarded in landfill it has a big climate change impact.

According to WRAP, UK families could save up to £420 per year by eliminating food waste. This is where we should focus, not on the less than £5 per year that it would cost to landfill any unrecycled packaging.

Jane Bickerstaffe of INCPEN continued:

"Environmental issues are complex and all of us need to work together to tackle them – that means industry, consumers and local government cooperating. Promoting one sector's interests above the others is pointless and counter-productive – it's the environment that suffers."

Ends

Notes to editors:

1. DEFRA statistics show that **packaging contributes 18% of household waste** which represents about **3% - by weight and volume – of landfilled waste.**

2. The average household's annual purchases weigh about 3 tonnes. This compares to less than 200kg of packaging required to protect them.
3. Landfill charges (@ £32 per tonne) for a year's worth of packaging is roughly £6 per household. (200kg of waste x £32 per tonne (assuming a worst case scenario that all goes to landfill. In fact over 1 million tonnes of household packaging is recycled).

INCPEN – the Industry Council for Packaging & the Environment is a research organisation set up in 1974 to study the environmental and social impact of packaging. It draws together an influential group of companies that operate throughout the supply chain and share a common interest in packaging, the environment and sustainable development.

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