

Trends In Food Packaging Drive Sustainable Business Mainstream

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It's hard to miss the growing conversation around single-use plastics in food packaging – you may have heard of [The War on Straws](#), or seen reports on the [Great Pacific Garbage Patch](#). Because sustainable, recyclable alternatives are needed more than ever, consumers are demanding better solutions and as a result, driving sustainable business practices into the mainstream.

Not everyone realizes that containers and packaging alone contribute [nearly a quarter](#) of the material reaching landfills in the US, and some of these discarded materials are food-related containers and packaging. Due to recent shifts in the global recycling industry, recyclable materials are already [piling up in US landfills](#). But, packaging made from post-consumer recycled materials helps divert waste from landfill while adding value for brands and customers. That's why emerging sustainable food packaging options are crucial as a solution that minimizes waste while allowing purpose-driven brands to meet the needs of their customers.

Businesses Setting the New Standard

As environmentally-friendly practices become the new standard, especially in the food and beverage industries, brands must shift and evolve with consumer attitudes. It's up to businesses to lead the way in environmental stewardship, and more and more, they're making an effort to address these issues by setting new standards and measurable goals to move the needle. For example, [Heinz has pledged](#) to make 100% of its packaging globally recyclable, reusable or compostable by 2025.

This shift is largely being driven by consumer demand. Research shows that [66%](#) of consumers will pay more for products from companies committed to environmentally-friendly practices and 70% of millennials are willing to pay more for a product that makes an impact on issues they care about. According to a recent Cone Communications survey, [87%](#) of Americans will purchase a product because a company advocated for an issue they cared about.

We are also seeing more demand from investors. For example, a group of 25 investors managing more than \$1 trillion in assets is [demanding](#) that Nestle SA, PepsiCo Inc., Procter & Gamble Co. and Unilever NV reduce their use of plastic packaging, calling it environmentally damaging.

Progressing toward a Circular Economy

Businesses moving toward closed-loop manufacturing processes are contributing to the development of a truly sustainable economy. How does this come to life? Here's what you need to look for in your company's sustainable packaging:

1. **Use recycled fiber in packaging:** Brands can reduce their environmental impact by using recycled fiber in direct-contact food packaging. Making this part of your supply chain can help you meet your company's sustainability goals, and also has implications for waste reduction and waste management.
2. **Pay attention to end-of-life for packaging:** Another approach to consider would be a focus on end-of-life for packaging. Companies are increasingly responsible for their packaging, even after it leaves their facilities. So, they need to ensure that it is recyclable, biodegradable or contains recycled material (if it cannot be recycled).
3. **Make sure it's safe:** Still, it's not enough to just be recyclable. Examine how it's made. It's important to look for 100% post-consumer recycled fiber that is FDA-compliant for direct food contact.

Consumers everywhere are increasingly looking to companies and brands to take the lead on environmental issues. Recent trends demonstrate a shift toward bans and restrictions on unsustainable materials, encouraging the adoption of sustainable materials and practices.

For the food, beverage and restaurant industries, environmentally-friendly post-consumer recycled products that reduce environmental impact and contribute to the development of a truly sustainable economy will soon become the new norm.

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