

A Vision for Sustainable Packaging

The Sustainable Packaging Coalition envisions a world where all packaging is sourced responsibly, designed to be effective and safe throughout its life cycle, meets market criteria for performance and cost, is made entirely using renewable energy and once used, is recycled efficiently to provide a valuable resource for subsequent generations. In summary: a true closed loop system for all packaging.

The mission of the Sustainable Packaging Coalition is to use thorough research and science-based approaches to help advance and communicate a positive, robust environmental vision for packaging and to support innovative, functional packaging materials and systems that promote economic and environmental health.

The purpose of this document is to take the important first step in articulating an agreed upon definition of the term “sustainable packaging” so that all parties are working toward the same vision. By providing a common framework, the packaging industry can evaluate current efforts, identify opportunities and begin to pursue strategies to develop sustainable packaging materials and systems.

The definition is intended as a “target vision” for companies to strive toward through continuous improvement and will evolve over time with new materials and technologies.

Definition of Sustainable Packaging

The criteria presented here blend broad sustainability objectives with business considerations and strategies that address the environmental concerns related to the life cycle of packaging. These criteria relate to the activities of our membership and define the areas in which we actively seek to encourage transformation, innovation and optimization. We believe that by successfully addressing these criteria, packaging can be transformed into a closed loop flow of packaging materials in a system that is economically robust and provides benefit throughout its life cycle – a sustainable packaging system.

Sustainable packaging ¹:

- A. Is beneficial, safe & healthy for individuals and communities throughout its life cycle;
- B. Meets market criteria for performance and cost;
- C. Is sourced, manufactured, transported, and recycled using renewable energy;
- D. Optimizes the use of renewable or recycled source materials;
- E. Is manufactured using clean production technologies and best practices;
- F. Is made from materials healthy in all probable end-of-life scenarios;
- G. Is physically designed to optimize materials and energy;
- H. Is effectively recovered and utilized in biological and/or industrial closed loop cycles.

These criteria outline a framework for specific actions. The SPC recognizes that the timelines for achievement will vary across criteria and packaging materials. Together, these criteria characterize our vision of sustainable packaging.

¹ No ranking is implied in the order of criteria