For many AMERIPEN members reaching 100% reusable, recyclable or compostable packaging is more than a goal, it’s a strategic initiative. In their efforts to reduce environmental impact by increasing the circularity of packaging, our members recognize the value of collaboration and the importance of working across the packaging value chain. Learn below how AMERIPEN members are working to advance end of life recovery and reuse of packaging.

**Raw Materials**

The materials and formats we use to design packaging can play a significant role in its ability to be recycled or composted.

**Recycling Technology**

Rapid innovation within the packaging industry often exceeds the speed in which the recycling industry can follow. By working with recyclers to balance packaging value with end of life consideration, the packaging industry can advance true sustainability.

**Converter**

Converters are often the linchpin to creating recyclable packaging. Converters work with material suppliers and their own innovation teams to find creative ways to meet brand goals. Often this requires converters to develop deep and complex relationships across the packaging value chain.

**Branded Packaging**

Many AMERIPEN brand members have set goals to increase the recyclability and recycled content of their packaging. Partnerships with raw material suppliers and converters are essential to success.

When we consider life-cycle impacts and work collaboratively across the value chain, we can design packaging that provides increased product protection and reduced environmental impact. By balancing both design needs with end-of-life solutions we can create sustainable packaging value chains.
Creating Sustainable Packaging Across the Value Chain

Raw Material

Design for Recycling

Dow has created a new water-based adhesive free of Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC) which helps laminate multi-material films together. As a water-based adhesive, ROBOND™ permits for easy separation during the recycling process. By creating a process that helps for improved sortation of multi-material films, Dow’s innovation will improve plastic sortation to produce higher and better quality recyclate. ROBOND™ has received recognition by the Association of Plastics Recyclers (APR) Critical Guidance Process which recognizes innovations to improve packaging recycling.

Converters

Recycled Content for Direct Food Contact

AMERIPEN member Berry Global has long invested in numerous recycling technologies and partnerships in order to increase their access to recycled content. In October 2021, Berry announced plans to produce a food-service drinking cup made with recycled polypropylene. Through a partnership with a chemical recycler and food-service retailer the three companies will work to collect, recycle, re-manufacture and sell plastic drinking cups with 20% recycled content. While the immediate goal of this initiative is to divert 10 million pounds of waste from landfills in two years, all three partners believe this is a step towards increased recycled polypropylene for food service packaging.

Branded Packaging

Increasing Recycled Content

Mondeléz International reports that 93% of its packaging portfolio is already designed for recycling. Their next goal is a minimum of 5% recycled content across all their plastic packaging. Obtaining recycled content for food packaging can be difficult due to high regulatory requirements to ensure direct food contact safety. Through a partnership with Berry Global, and a diversified chemical firm, Mondeléz International’s Philadelphia cream cheese containers, sold in Europe, will now include recycled content. Commitments between brands and recyclers to secure markets for advance recycling technology are valuable in advancing and the scaling growth of these promising technologies.

Designing Packaging for Recycling

In Spring 2021, Nature Valley launched the first fully recyclable polyethylene bar wrapper. “As leaders in the granola bar category, we feel a responsibility to continue innovating and encouraging future solutions that could make recycling wrappers even easier,” says Brian Higgins with General Mills, which created Nature Valley and launched the category in the 1970s. The recyclable wrapper was a multi-year effort that included close partnerships with plastic recyclers to ensure it met their strict standards. The new film also carries the How2Recycle® label for store drop off, and Nature Valley encourages consumers to return it to stores with their “bag of bags.” In hopes of expanding this technology, General Mills did not seek a patent and encourages others to pursue it.

Recycling Technology

Validating Recyclability

The primary purpose of packaging is to protect the products within. Sonoco’s iconic fiber based containers with steel bottoms are an example of a technology that plays a significant role in reducing food waste. Manufactured with two different materials (fiber and steel) some MRFs and curbside communities have argued these containers are difficult to recycle. Sonoco worked with two consulting firms, and an advanced robotic sortation company, to map the movement of these cannisters through a typical municipal recycling process. The studies showed that in most cases, traditional MRFs would direct this packaging to steel bales and the robotic technology could easily identify and sort these containers correctly. The result, a 45% decrease in climate emissions over landfiling. Further, depending on the product within, these containers could extend the shelf life of food from twenty days to two years!

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