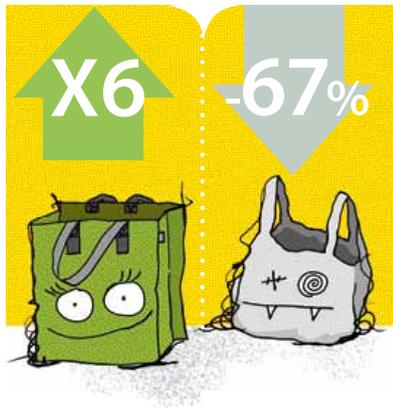


Single-use shopping bags reduced by two-thirds



Belgian Federation of Distributors exceeds target by a wide margin

A campaign launched by the Belgian federation of retailers (Comeos) in 2003 aimed at changing consumer behaviour. The campaign set itself the task of reducing usage of single-use plastic shopping bags. Thanks to the joint efforts of all actors in the distribution sector, usage reduced by 67% in just four years. Many consumers now use reusable bags, boxes, and baskets instead.

'MY REUSABLE BAG AND I, WE ARE INSEPARABLE'

The campaign launched by Comeos was dubbed 'My reusable bag and I, we are inseparable'. Member companies of Comeos committed to reducing the number of single-use shopping bags by 25% between 2003 and 2006 as part of their prevention plan. They also aimed to double the use of reusable alternatives.

..... prevent pack

Results beyond expectations

The outcome of this campaign is extremely gratifying given the fact that the initial targets were vastly exceeded. Between 2003 and 2007, the use of re-usable alternatives increased six-fold while the number of distributed single-use bags dropped by 67%. In total, some 3,500 tons of plastic were saved during these four years as a result of this campaign.

Actively promoting alternatives

What is the reason for this success? The actions implemented by the distribution sector focused on four points:

- **OFFER ALTERNATIVES TO CUSTOMERS.** These alternatives have appeared in various formats: reusable plastic bags, canvas bags for bottles, reusable boxes, foldable boxes, reusable thermal bags, cooling boxes, and caddies.
- **ACTIVELY PROMOTE THESE ALTERNATIVES** through free distribution, additional loyalty points, or increased advertising and visibility, among other approaches.
- **LIMIT THE AVAILABILITY OF SINGLE-USE BAGS.** Certain shops have eliminated these bags altogether. Others have voluntarily placed them out of sight or now charge for single-use bags.
- **INFORM MEMBERS OF STAFF** about the use and prevention of plastic bags.

good to remember

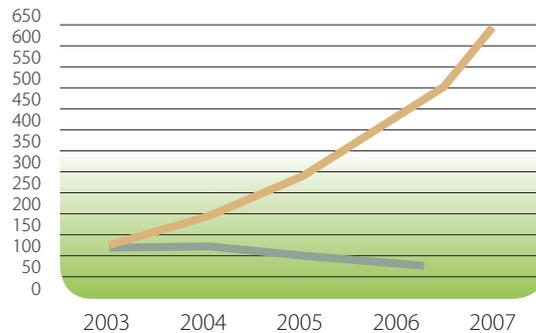
Comeos initiated the campaign 'My reusable bag and I, we are inseparable' which has **reduced** the number of single-use shopping bags by **67%**.

Consumers adapted **gradually to reusable alternatives** such as canvas bags and foldable boxes.

Given the success of the campaign, Comeos subsequently launched a **new action that continued through 2009**.

Single-use shopping bags reduced by two-thirds

The use of reusable bags, boxes, and baskets increased six-fold between 2003 and 2007.



evolution in % of single-use bags and their alternatives.

■ single-use bags
■ reusable alternatives

Adopting new habits

Although the campaign was eventually successful, it took some time for consumers to adapt their habits. Initially, consumers often forgot to bring along the alternative bags that they had purchased during previous visits to a shop. A substantial reduction in the number of single-use bags was observed only after several months. In other words, the information stage was followed by a learning phase before the new habit was gradually adopted.

By lowering the consumption of single-use shopping bags, 3.500 tons of plastic were saved between 2003 and 2007.



Supermarkets account for bulk of the effort

The bulk of the success can be credited to supermarkets. Previously, they were responsible for the distribution of 92,4% of all free single-use shopping bags. In this sector, trips to make purchases are often planned beforehand, which makes it easier for consumers to bring along an alternative solution to single-use bags.

However, there are certain obvious limitations in the food sector. Products such as meat and fish, for instance, require single-use plastic bags to ensure proper hygiene.

The reduction target defined in 2004 was also achieved by the non-food sector, even though fewer alternatives were available.

What is prevention?

Prevention is optimizing packaging in order to minimize the total environmental impact of a product and its packaging. This difficult exercise requires that multiple criteria and parameters be taken into account. It applies to the entire product chain, from design to waste disposal.



Quantitative and qualitative prevention

In terms of packaging, there are two types of prevention:

QUANTITATIVE PREVENTION

aims to reduce the amount of materials used. The weight and volume of packaging must minimize the quantity of waste generated by the product/packaging combination while ensuring that the packaging fulfils its roles. This means minimizing the amount of packaging without increasing the risk of damage to the product, thus ensuring safety, hygiene, and customer acceptance.

QUALITATIVE PREVENTION

refers to the complete design of the packaging. Using recycled and/or recyclable materials, designing a format that optimizes transport while reducing production waste, extending the preservation of the packaged food, lowering CO₂ emissions, etc. Another aspect is avoiding materials that are, for instance, potentially harmful to the product and the environment, or favouring materials that make recycling easier.

Packaging that is too light **must often be avoided**

For each product/packaging combination, there is a point where the packaging is neither too heavy nor too light. This optimal point provides sufficient protection to the product while minimizing the environmental impact of the product/packaging combination. This impact is actually much greater when the packaging becomes too light – which entails a greater risk of content loss – than when the packaging is

too heavy. Indeed, the ecological impact entailed by the 'manufacturing' of a product in the broadest sense (cultivation, harvesting, assembly, etc.) is generally greater than that of just its packaging. Therefore, any loss of product has far greater consequences for the environment than the waste disposal of the packaging that is necessary to ensure its protection.

good to remember

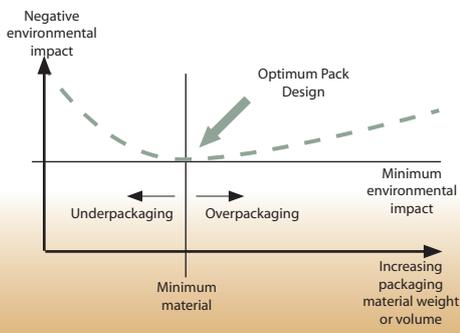
Efficient prevention minimizes the total environmental impact of a **product/packaging combination**.

Prevention concerns the entire product chain, **from design to final processing**. This includes optimizing the interaction between the primary, secondary, and tertiary packaging.

Prevention aims to optimize both the **quantity** (weight and volume) and the **quality** (materials used, optimized logistics, etc.) of packaging in relation to the packaged products.

Prevention is a process requiring continuous improvement. It must **incorporate the latest technology and knowledge**.

What is prevention?



Where does **prevention start**? And where does it **end**?

The prevention of packaging concerns the entire product chain, from design to waste. All stages of the lifecycle of a product/packaging combination must therefore be taken into account when designing packaging: production, transport, usage, and final processing. This prevention also covers the adequacy of primary, secondary, and tertiary packaging in relation to one another. During the production stage, for instance, it is important to minimize production waste resulting from the making of the packaging. Similarly, during the transport stage, the design of the packaging must enable the loading of as many products as possible onto a single pallet.

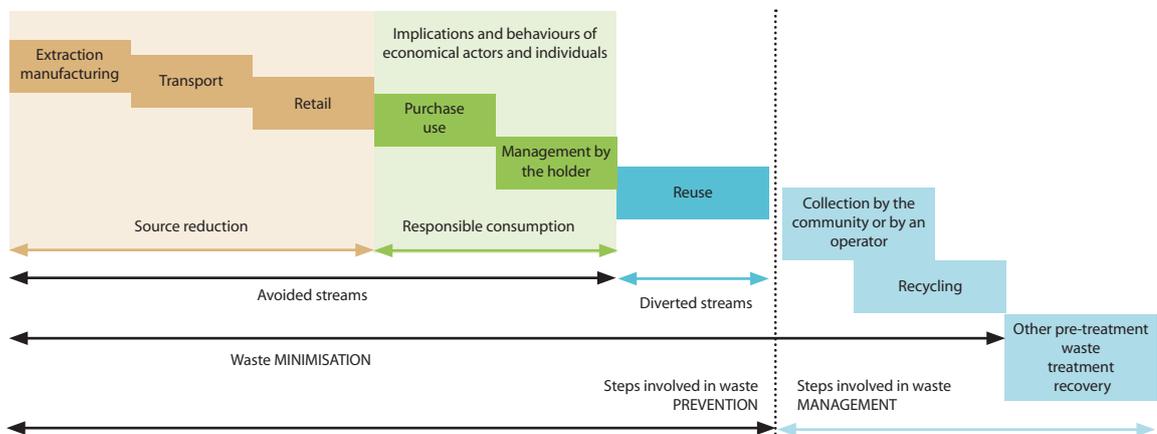
A diagram on the ADEME website indicates where to best implement the various prevention initiatives, always taking into account the fact that the waste from the **product/packaging combination** has to be reduced, and not just the waste from the packaging alone.

The model developed by the Packforsk Foundation clearly shows that for every product/packaging combination, a lack of packaging compared to the optimum entails more negative effects than excess packaging.

PACKAGING - a tool for the prevention of environmental impact, report nr. 194, June 2000

http://www.stfi.se/upload/Gamla_PF-sidor/REPORT_194.PDF

Prevention covers each stage in the lifecycle of a product packaging combination.



A process of **continuous** improvement

Prevention is a process of continuous improvement. The packaging often changes during the lifetime of a product. Every change is also an opportunity to assess further potential for prevention, taking into account acquired experience, new materials that are available, and new technologies. Such an assessment should cover the production, consumption, and

recycling stages. Five European standards provide support in this process. They list all key requirements related to packaging and packaging prevention.

Most topics presented in this sheet will be discussed in further detail in our forthcoming editions.

For additional information: European Commission report to the European Council and Parliament regarding the implementation of the 94/62/EC Directive on packaging and packaging waste.

Key requirements in terms of packaging and packaging prevention in European Directives: NBN EN13427, NBN EN13428, NBN EN13429, NBN EN13430, and NBN EN13432.

Essential requirements for packaging in Europe, a guide published by Euopen (the European Organization for Packaging and the Environment).

Reusable foldable box eliminates waste



Since 2003, Colruyt's Collect & Go customers have received their goods packed in foldable plastic boxes. This method has enabled the retailer to eliminate 630 tonnes of cardboard annually. It is a smart and simple way to prevent packaging waste and improve ease of use at the same time.



Collect & Go shopping service **requires well-adapted packaging**

Since 2000, Colruyt customers can have their goods collected by store personnel so they don't have to run through the aisles themselves. They simply order the goods online through the Collect & Go service. Initially, Colruyt delivered the goods in cardboard boxes, which was in line with the company's policy of avoiding the use of disposable plastic bags.

'In those days, we reused the cardboard boxes that we got from our apple suppliers. Unfortunately, the popularity of the Collect & Go service grew so rapidly that we never had enough of them

in stock,' says environmental coordinator Lies Baute. 'As a result, we regularly had to call for extra boxes, which were delivered by truck. Now, transporting empty boxes is relatively expensive, because you are essentially transporting air. Furthermore, these boxes consumed a lot of storage space at our Collect & Go delivery points. They also came in various shapes and sizes, making uniform packing difficult. That's why we eventually switched to standard sized foldable reusable plastic boxes.'

Saving costs and improving comfort

By using foldable boxes, Colruyt saves on packaging material as well as transport costs. 'We eliminated 630 tonnes of cardboard a year,' says Ms Baute. 'At the same time, we avoid quite significant logistic costs because the customer returns the boxes. The boxes have an average service life of five years, so we don't have to replace them frequently.'

Ease of use is another major advantage, both for the customer and the individual supermarket. The folded boxes occupy

considerably less space in warehouse storage. At home, they can be put away easily. All boxes are the same size, which makes it easier for store personnel to manipulate and pack as well as for customers to load them in their car. Ms Baute adds: 'Don't forget the very important fact that it also gives a more professional impression to our customer and helps retain customer loyalty. In short, the switch was profitable for the customer, for the individual supermarkets, and for our entire organization.'

Do you also have an interesting prevention project?

Has your company realized a successful packaging prevention project? Let us know via prevention@fostplus.be.

good to remember

Colruyt was searching for a well-adapted and environment-friendly packaging solution for their Collect & Go collection service.

Initially they used cardboard boxes, but that proved too expensive and was not sufficiently efficient.

By switching to standard sized foldable plastic boxes, Colruyt managed to cut costs, make the service more efficient, and improve comfort for both customers and store personnel alike.

Reusable foldable box eliminates waste



How does Collect & Go work?

Step 1: order online

The customer places their order via the Internet. They choose the store where they want to collect their goods the next day. The service costs 4,50 euro.

Step 2: a store stock picker collects the goods

Store personnel collect the goods and put them in foldable plastic boxes. Thanks to the standardized size of these boxes, it is easy to manipulate and store them.

Step 3: the customer collects their order

The customer collects their goods at a dedicated area in the store and pay for the goods. There is a 4,75 euro deposit for each foldable box. At the same time, they can collect the deposit on the boxes that they return.

Lies Baute, environmental coordinator:

'We eliminated the use of 630 tonnes of cardboard annually and avoid substantial logistic costs.'

You can eliminate packaging material as well

A smart packaging solution can save costs, improve service to customers, and protect the environment.

Colruyt provides some tips:

- Systematically screen your organization for ideas by means of a questionnaire to be checked at least annually in each department. This way you can detect potential savings
- Draw up a balance sheet for each prevention measure taken in order to inform your employees of the benefits.

Colruyt and the environment

The Colruyt Group established its **Greenline prevention** policy in 1992 and has refined it over the years. This programme makes a strong statement regarding Group Colruyt's commitment to the environment, including its awareness of the environmental impact of packaging.

The Colruyt Group is committed to always offering the lowest prices on the market. Offering low-end prices means working with thin margins; therefore **preventing unnecessary costs becomes even more important.**

Project outcomes:

- Since its inception, Colruyt has refrained from handing out disposable bags to customers. They actively stimulated the reuse of the cardboard boxes from its suppliers.
- By switching to standardized foldable plastic boxes, Colruyt reduced the use of disposable packaging in its Collect & Go service. This service is still growing rapidly, so the savings become more substantial every year.

Packaging that discourages shoplifting

Securing products through visible and invisible means

Packaging plays an increasingly important role in fighting shoplifting. Each year, the distribution sector loses 1.25% of its turnover to shoplifters. That is enough to warrant investment in more secure types of packaging that integrate modern technologies. Visible and invisible innovations make life increasingly difficult for thieves.

prevent pack

A hundred shoplifters a day

Every year, shops catch about 35.000 shoplifters in Belgium and Luxembourg. In 2007, these thefts accounted for a shortfall in earnings of 656 million euros, which represents more than one percent of the distribution sector's turnover. On top of that, shop owners spend over 200 million euros a year to fight shoplifting. In total, the cost of shoplifting for the sector exceeds 800 million euros annually. This cost eats into the profit margin of shops and in most cases is passed onto consumers through

increased prices.

A British study carried out by Check Point Europe reveals some details. Customers account for 65% of the thefts. Shop personnel are guilty in 31% of the cases. In addition, 4% of thefts are committed by external collaborators — particularly supplier staff who have access to commercial infrastructures.

The deterrent role of packaging

Packaging plays an important role in fighting shoplifting. Certain types of packaging, such as blisters, intentionally make it difficult to open. This avoids the product being easily removed from its packaging in the store or warehouse. Other types of

packaging are excessively large compared to the size of the actual product in order to make their theft easier to notice. To help prevent theft by staff, certain suppliers wrap their pallets in black film to make the products less visible.

good to remember

Shoplifted products cost the **European distribution sector almost 30 billion euros a year**. They cost the sector in Belgium and Luxembourg over 800 million euros. This cost is passed onto consumers one way or another.

Two thirds of the thefts are carried out by customers, another third by shop personnel.

Packaging can **deter thefts (blisters that are difficult to open, oversized packaging, et cetera)**. Some shops use reusable cases that are removed by the cashier..

The distribution sector is investing in invisible safety systems (such as RFID). These enable a **reduction in certain packaging elements** previously dedicated to fighting shoplifting.

Packaging that discourages shoplifting

Most stolen products in European retail stores

- | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 Alcohol | 6 DVDs/CDs |
| 2 Cosmetic products | 7 Children's clothing |
| 3 Women's clothing | 8 Accessories |
| 4 Perfumes | 9 Luxury clothing |
| 5 Razor blades | 10 Delicatessen |

In Europe, shoplifters primarily target expensive goods, and brands.

Technology that secures at the source

An even more efficient system is to integrate a form of technological security into the packaging. The manufacturer integrates a protective element, such as a chip or a sticker, during the packaging process. This invisible device is impossible to remove and generates an alarm at the exit of a shop if it is not scanned at the cashier. These new 'microscopic' technologies enable the reduction of certain packaging elements previously used to fight shoplifting. The distribution sector and security companies are currently preparing a joint action plan and recommendations to spread this technology. The target is to achieve a wide deployment of this type of protection, particularly for products that are most subject to shoplifting.

Developing electronic surveillance

European retailers continue to look for new integrated security methods to fight shoplifting. In 2006, they invested around 8 billion euros in the development of secure solutions. There is indeed a direct relation between increased investments in protection and reduced financial losses related to theft. The use of Electric Article Surveillance (EAS) is developing rapidly. Such devices are installed by the supplier to protect a product at all stages of the distribution chain. Radio Frequency Identification (RFID), which is invisible to consumers, is one example of EAS.



For additional information :

- Global Retail Theft Barometer (GRTB) carried out by Check Point Europe: <http://www.checkpointeurope.com>
- Belgian federation of retailers (COMEOS) – <http://www.comeos.be>