

The ULS Report



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

New ULS Study Shows How Consumers Drive Sustainability, Packaging Trends

(BOULDER, CO - JANUARY 21, 2016) *The ULS (Use Less Stuff) Report* has published a comprehensive study on packaging efficiency. Besides providing contemporary results, the research examines trends in retail packaging since the publication of the original study in 1995 and the follow-up in 2006. Entitled *A Study of Packaging Efficiency As It Relates to Waste Prevention*, it is available at The ULS Report website, <http://www.use-less-stuff.com>.

To gauge efficiency, over 300 containers in fifty-six grocery categories were examined to determine the amount of packaging required to deliver a given amount of product. Study methodology gave credit for source reduction, recyclability, and use of recycled materials. The methodology, findings, and conclusions were reviewed by the Laboratory of Manufacturing and Sustainability (LMAS) at the University of California, Berkeley.

According to ULS Report Editor Robert Lilienfeld, “There are three legs on the sustainability stool – economic, environmental, and social. The study clearly shows that, over the past 20 years, packaging has evolved to more effectively deliver on these sustainability requirements.”

Key learning from the research includes the following:

1. In line with the EPA’s waste prevention hierarchy, source reduction, or light weighting, continues to play a primary role in reducing packaging discards, thus conserving materials and energy and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Plastics, especially in the form of films and flexible pouches, play important roles in significantly reducing discards per unit of product delivered.
2. Recovery for recycling plays an increasingly important role in the effort to reduce packaging discards and overall solid waste levels. This is especially true for steel and aluminum cans, beverage bottles made from PETE, HPDE and glass, and paperboard cartons. These materials are collectively recycled at a 34.2% rate today, up significantly versus 25.7% in 2005. In fact, the level of primary packaging recycling is now equal to the recovery rate for total waste, and is the primary reason that the total recovery rate increased from 31.4% in 2005 to 34.3% today.



3. Social trends towards more active, healthier lifestyles increase the need for products that provide convenience and weight control solutions. Resulting packages can lead to inefficiencies, as they require smaller sizes or the increased functionality needed to deliver ready-to-eat, ready-to-serve, and out-of-home product solutions.

Mr. Lilienfeld noted that, “In general, the environmental impact of food is up to 10 times greater than the impact of its packaging. So, a bit more portion control or ready-to-eat food packaging can actually reduce waste, as these packages ensure that the food inside is actually eaten rather than thrown away.”

The ULS (Use Less Stuff) Report (<http://www.use-less-stuff.com>) is a leading environmental newsletter and has been published since 1994. Editor Bob Lilienfeld is a widely recognized authority on waste prevention and co-author of the book *Use Less Stuff: Environmental Solutions for Who We Really Are*.

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