

FACTSHEET No. 16**BREAD AND THE ENVIRONMENT**

- Environmental policy**
- Bread packaging and the environment**

ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

Members of The Federation of Bakers are committed to maintaining and promoting safe and environmentally responsible practices for the benefit of consumers, the communities in which they operate and their employees. In order to achieve this objective The Federation recommends that companies implement strategies to ensure they and their employees:

- conform with all relevant legislation and codes of practice
- follow good manufacturing practice
- recognise the need to provide customers with safe, wholesome products
- take action to minimise emissions to air, land and water
- make efficient use of energy and take action to reduce consumption
- make efficient use of raw materials and packaging
- seek continuous improvement in environmental performance
- monitor progress towards agreed objectives.

In developing these strategies Members of The Federation of Bakers recognise the need to raise awareness of environmental issues within their companies and train employees in environmental best practice.

BREAD PACKAGING AND THE ENVIRONMENT

- It is estimated that the European Community produces 2200 million tonnes of waste per year, of which only 50 million tonnes is packaging (25 million from household waste, 15 million from services and 10 million from industry). An average 18% of this packaging waste is recycled.
- In the UK 90% of our household waste from packaging is disposed of in landfill sites. Government has now introduced legislation requiring that at least 50% of UK packaging waste must be re-used. This means producing something of value either by recycling, biological treatment or recovering energy from incineration.

Polythene Bread Wrappers

- Bread is environmentally friendly, producing more food energy than any other type of food compared to the resources required to produce and deliver it to the consumer.
- 80% of bread is sliced and wrapped, most of it in polythene wrappers. This is essential for:
 - hygiene
 - protecting the loaf from damage or tampering
 - providing information to the consumer - on nutrition, ingredients and other labeling information
 - maintaining the shelf life of the product (wrapped bread stays fresh for three or four days whereas unwrapped bread goes stale within a day)
 - avoiding waste - it can be used to the last slice. Unwrapped stale bread which is thrown away is wasteful of the energy needed to produce and deliver it.
- Bread wrappers are made from the simplest form of plastic: polythene. From a practical and an environmental point of view, the polythene bread wrapper is the most efficient.
- It is illegal to use plastic which has been recycled to wrap food but recycled bread wrappers could be used for a wide variety of purposes other than food packaging. However, with more than 50 million bread wrappers in use every week, collecting and sorting them for recycling from household waste is uneconomic and not environmentally efficient.
- Polythene bread wrappers have a calorific value of 43MJ/kg which is similar to fuel oil. Incinerating the polythene to recover energy is therefore likely to be the most efficient option for waste management.
- Waxed paper wrappers are used for a minority of bread loaves. This form of packaging is not suitable for recycling.

Plastic Bread Baskets

- Plastic bread baskets have been used for many years to transport bread from the bakery to the shop. They are reusable.
- Studies have shown that the environmental impact arising from the manufacture of an item of packaging becomes insignificant if it is used more than 15 to 20 times. Bread baskets meet this criterion.
- The introduction of the current legislation on packaging waste has highlighted the environmental advantages of reusable containers for the transport of all types of goods.
- The only environmental impact of the distribution of bread by plastic bread baskets is:
 - transport costs - these are incurred whatever packaging is used
 - basket washing - this is essential in the interests of hygiene and food safety.