



SEGUNDO EJERCICIO TURNO LIBRE Y PRIMER EJERCICIO PROMOCION INTERNA

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REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE: A MANTRA FOR FOOD PACKAGING

How a circular approach to packaging can reduce food loss and waste and respect the environment.

Packaging plays an important role in keeping food fresh, ensuring it is safe and reducing loss and waste – but it can have negative effects on our environment. It's time for a more circular approach.

Whether it's made from glass, plastic, metal, paper or bamboo, packaging plays an important role in keeping food fresh, ensuring it is safe as well as extending its shelf-life to reduce loss and waste.

In primary packaging, or packaging which comes in direct contact with food, plastic is very common, being lightweight, flexible and comparatively low cost. While some plastics can be easily recycled and reused, others cannot, and, as we know, the impact of plastic on the environment is huge when it is not reused or recycled.

A circular approach is key. Circular packaging solutions focus on a reduce-reuse-recycle approach, including minimizing single-use plastic. Here are three better packaging solutions we can leverage to reduce food loss and waste:

1) Re-useable packaging: food loss is the decrease in the quantity or quality of food up until the retail stage.

In the case of fruits and vegetables, losses resulting from compression and abrasion tend to be highest during transport. This compromises the quality and economic value of fresh produce. The use of appropriate packaging can significantly reduce these losses, protecting produce in transit, and ultimately reducing the carbon footprint of food.

FAO introduced good post-harvest management practices together with reusable bulk packaging materials such as plastic crates for use during



transportation. The plastic crates provide a much higher level of protection by absorbing shock during transport, while the use of locally available crate-liners such as leaves, straw and newspaper reduce abrasion damage.

2) Sustainable and innovative packaging options: using sustainable materials is of course one of the biggest ways to minimize packaging's impact on the environment.

In many countries, fresh produce has long-since been sold in the most natural packaging of all – leaves. Whilst leaves are not enough to protect fruit during transport, at the retail level, they are a good alternative to plastic as they help keep food fresh until it is sold. The bundling of fresh produce is a popular practice across the developing world in view of the high cost and limited access to other packaging options. For example, asparagus and leafy vegetables are commonly wrapped with banana leaves or newspaper before being tied together and sold as a bundle.

Another option is to use innovative packaging methods that reduce food waste and loss by preserving food quality. One example of this is Modified Atmosphere Packaging (MAP), which maintains a low level of oxygen in packaged foods to ensure a longer shelf life. MAP is commonly used in coffee packaging.

3) Refillable packaging: sometimes, due to the large size of retail packaging, consumers purchase more food than needed and often throw away what they cannot use.

Refillable packaging, such as cleanable glass or stainless-steel containers, offers consumers the opportunity to purchase food in loose or bulk formats in retail outlets.

Packaging plays an important role in not only reducing food loss and waste but by extension boosting food security, nutrition and livelihoods too. A circular approach to how we package our food can make a big difference to the food security of our communities and the health of our planet.