

# Excess Packaging

*the Facts!*

Packaging is impossible to avoid but as consumers we do have the power to make better choices about the things we purchase.

A significant amount of fresh food sold, particularly in supermarkets, is contained in excess packaging, some of which cannot be recycled.

## What is considered 'excess' packaging?

In today's modern lifestyle it is not always convenient or even an option to purchase fresh produce without packaging. The reality is, for most people, we are mainly purchasing our fresh fruit, vegetables and meats from the supermarket.

To freight, store and display large volumes of food, it may sometimes be necessary for supermarkets to package fresh produce. Eg: Foods that are easily damaged such as berries need a hard plastic punnet (which is recyclable) to protect them as they travel the consumer journey from farm-gate to your home.

However, most fruit and vegetables can and have, for decades, survived the consumer journey in their own, natural packaging, without the need for plastic and/or foam trays. If a piece of fruit or vegetable is firmer or more thick-skinned than a strawberry it does not require packaging.

Excessive packaging does nothing to improve the quality of the produce. It is primarily done for the convenience to the consumer and profit to the supermarket. Bundling fresh produce into groups conveniently stored into a tray encourages the consumer to purchase more than they may need.

## What can I do to avoid excess packaging?

Take a moment to consider the packaging around the food and how necessary it is.

Do the perceived benefits really justify the packaging spending an eternity in landfill?

- Avoid any fruit or vegetable packaged in foam trays or wrapped in soft plastic. The supermarket should display alternate, non packaged items
- Support retailers or farmers markets that use little to no packaging or packaging that is a better environmental option
- Avoid pre-sliced vegetables, such as mushrooms and celery. These are usually priced higher due to the 'convenience' of the pre-slicing however they are always packaged in plastic containers. They also have a shorter shelf life.
- Bring along your own vegetable bags for bulk purchase items
- Foam Trays - cannot be recycled. These are commonly used for meat but they are increasingly being used for fresh fruit and vegetables.

### **Hard Plastic**

- Trays containing kiwi fruit and apples can be recycled via the yellow kerbside bin, but do we really need all that plastic? That's a consumer decision for you to make.

### **Soft plastic**

- Cling wrap is used with the foam trays and sometimes to wrap individual items of fruit or vegetables
- Plastic netting bags eg: used for oranges
- Plastic bags eg: 1kg or more bags for potatoes

These Soft plastics can only be recycled via the [Redcycle bin](#) at Coles and Woolworths supermarkets.