



Toronto, ON, October 16, 2014

## **World Food Day and Plastic Packaging: Protecting Food and Reducing Food Waste**

Toronto, ON October 16, 2014 - Today is [World Food Day](#). World Food Day (WFD) was founded by the [United Nations' \(UN\) Food and Agriculture Organization \(FAO\)](#) in 1945, and has been observed annually, every October 16, since 1981. The event was established to increase awareness of world hunger and poverty and to inspire solutions for world change.

Today, World Food Day is celebrated by many communities around the world. In Canada, the largest World Food Day event is celebrated in Langley, British Columbia — organized by the [Food For Famine Society](#).

Let's take a look at the connection between plastic food packaging, protecting food, reducing food waste and sustainability.

Many people assume that packaging must be recyclable to be “sustainable.” Recycling certainly does help reduce the environmental impact of packaging. Recycling reduces energy use, and it cuts greenhouse gas. Plus, recycling industries create significantly more and better jobs than simply hauling and burying garbage. Simply put, when materials have value, burying them in a big hole in the ground is an egregious waste of resources.

There actually are standards for measuring environmental sustainability that look at impacts across the entire “life cycle” of packaging. This includes all the material and energy inputs and outputs of the packaging. We need to look at energy used in manufacturing, water use, energy used in transportation, greenhouse gas and other emissions, impacts of solid waste disposal, and so on.

And then there's the big impact: food waste. Just imagine all the energy and resources invested in growing, protecting, delivering, preparing, and serving our food, and the accompanying impact on the environment. To protect that investment, we should use the packaging that delivers more food with less food waste and packaging waste.

And this is precisely where plastic packaging contributes to sustainability.

The very nature of plastics – lightweight yet strong – makes them ideal for all sorts of packaging and helps minimize the environmental impact of the packaging. A recent life cycle study compared six types of plastic packaging (caps and closures, beverage containers, other rigid containers, carrier bags, stretch/shrink wrap, and other flexible packaging) to the alternatives made with other materials.

The findings are stark. The alternatives for these six types of plastic packaging in Canada would:

- require almost 4.4 times as much packaging material by weight, increasing the amount of packaging used in Canada by nearly 5.5 million tonnes or 5.5 billion kilograms;
- increase energy use by 2.0 times – equivalent to the amount of oil transported by 18 supertankers; and
- result in 2.3 times more global warming potential – equivalent to adding 3.3 million more cars to our roads.

This means that plastic packaging delivers more food with significantly less waste, energy use, and global warming potential.

In addition to these benefits, plastic packaging can provide barriers to oxygen, light, temperatures, moisture, microbes, critters and dirt, which can greatly extend the shelf life of food and retard spoilage – leading to less food waste. Studies find that up to ten times more resources (materials, energy, water) are used to make and distribute food than are used to make the packaging that protects it. In the case of plastic packaging, the numbers can be even better – for example, only three percent of the energy used to produce a loaf of store-brought bread is needed to make its thin, lightweight plastic bread bag.

In other words, plastic packaging is an investment in protecting our food – and the resources we use to produce it.

More food delivered without damage and loss. Less packaging waste. Less food waste. Now that's a healthy contribution to sustainability.

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