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FPA Publishes E-commerce Streamlined LCA Case Studies

The case studies were developed to quantify the environmental impact of different flexible and non-flexible e-commerce packaging options, as well as the economic shipping impacts, based on dimensional weight charges vs. actual weight

Annapolis, MD: January 19, 2021 – The Flexible Packaging Association’s (FPA) [Sustainability Life Cycle and Economic Impacts of Flexible Packaging in E-commerce Report](#) provides a holistic view of the sustainability benefits that flexible packaging offers in e-commerce and quantifies the environmental and economic shipping impacts by comparing flexible packaging to other formats across a range of products.

For the report, FPA partnered with PTIS, LLC, and five different LCA case studies were developed using the EcolImpact-COMPASS® LCA software, which allows for quick life cycle comparisons between different package formats:

- [Peanut Butter Packaging](#)
- [Cereal Packaging](#)
- [Shoe Packaging](#)
- [Laundry Detergent Packaging](#)
- [E-commerce Mailer](#)

All primary, secondary, and tertiary packaging, including dunnage from the packages, were used for the assessment. Dunnage is a filler that is used to prevent a product from shifting during shipping, resulting in product damage. Dunnage may be either paper or plastic based, and includes crumpled paper, corrugated inserts, air pillows, and bubble wrap. A [dimensional weight and economics comparison for e-commerce](#) was also developed to highlight that the flexible packaging formats demonstrated clear and distinct advantages in reducing the dimensional weight across the product categories.

Additionally, the product-to-package ratio, as well as the amount of packaging that is landfilled for 1,000 kg of each product, was determined. The amount of packaging landfilled was based on the recycling rates for each material while assuming none of the flexible packages were recycled. However, most flexible packaging used in e-commerce applications, including bubble dunnage or poly mailers, are made of LDPE, which can be recycled with grocery bags and other films as part of the store drop-off program. These materials can qualify for the How2Recycle® store drop-off designation if they go through the certification process.

The results from many of the case studies show that flexible packaging has more preferable environmental attributes for carbon impact, fossil fuel usage, water usage, as well as material disposed of when compared to other package formats. This is due to the efficient use of resources enabled by flexible packaging.

E-commerce is a growing economic segment and as more products are shipped via e-commerce, brands continue to look for ways to optimize the shipping, reduce costs, and reduce environmental impact, while offering consumers a positive experience and protecting the product. To achieve these goals, more brands and e-commerce providers are using flexible packaging as either the primary package due to its ability to withstand robust handling and limit leaks or as the e-commerce delivery pack itself as a way to reduce the amount of packaging material and space utilized.

An additional benefit of flexible packaging includes the robust nature of the material, which can help reduce leaks or package breaks, thus significantly improving consumer enjoyment of a product (and brand). This is important in an e-commerce environment where a product is handled at least three times as often as is done within a traditional retail channel.

The streamlined LCA case studies and report is publicly available and can be downloaded by [clicking here](#).

For more information on the sustainability benefits of flexible packaging, please visit www.flexpack.org, or contact FPA at fpa@flexpack.org or 410-694-0800.

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About the Flexible Packaging Association (FPA)

The [Flexible Packaging Association](#) is the voice of the U.S. manufacturers of flexible packaging and their suppliers. The association's mission is connecting, advancing, and leading the flexible packaging industry. Flexible packaging represents over \$33 billion in annual sales in the U.S. and is the second largest, and one of the fastest growing segments of the packaging industry. Flexible packaging is produced from paper, plastic, film, aluminum foil, or any combination of those materials, and includes bags, pouches, labels, liners, wraps, rollstock, and other flexible products.

About PTIS, LLC

[PTIS, LLC](#) is a leading business and technology management company focused on Creating Value Through Packaging® and helping clients throughout the packaging value chain develop long term packaging strategies and programs. PTIS, recognized for foresight and thought leadership, and the success of their 20-year Future of Packaging program, helps companies achieve and incorporate these elements into their innovation programs, e-commerce, holistic productivity, sustainability, holistic design, and consumer/retail insights related to packaging.