

Packaging Food for Thought

The Following is made entirely from extracts from an independent BBC News Article;

“The trade-off is hard to fathom”.

Depending on how much of the heavier, recyclable packaging would in practice be recycled, you might find that the lighter, non-recyclable packaging actually generates less waste.

And once you start looking into plastic packaging, this kind of counterintuitive conclusion comes up all the time.

Some packaging is a foolish waste.

But are shrink-wrapped cucumbers really so silly if it means they stay fresh for 14 days rather than three?



Which is worse 1.5g (0.05oz) of plastic wrap or entire cucumbers going off before being eaten? Suddenly it's not so obvious.

Plastic bags stop bananas going brown so quickly, or new potatoes going green; they catch grapes that fall off bunches.

About a decade ago, one UK supermarket experimented with taking all its fruit and vegetables out of their packaging - and its food wastage rate doubled.

And it's not just shelf life - what about waste created before food gets to the shop in the first place?

Another supermarket, stung by criticism for putting apples in plastic-wrapped trays, tried selling them loose from big cardboard boxes - but so many were damaged in transit that the approach used more packaging per apple actually sold.



According to [a UK government report](#), only 3% of food is wasted before it gets to shops.

In developing countries, **that figure can be 50% - and that difference is partly due to how the food is packaged.**

As more of us live in cities, far from where food is grown, this matters more.

Even the dreaded single-use shopping bag might not be the villain it seems.

If you've bought sturdy, reusable bags from your supermarket, it's likely they're made from non-woven polypropylene - and they are less damaging, but only if you **use them at least 52 times.**

That's according to [a report by the Danish government](#), which weighed up the varied environmental impacts of producing and disposing of different kinds of bag.

And if your reusable bag is organic cotton, don't feel smug - the researchers reckon they need 20,000 uses to justify themselves. That's a shopping trip every day for over half a century.

The market can be a wonderful way of signalling popular desires.

Shoppers in 1940s America wanted convenient, pre-cut meat - and what economists call the "invisible hand" of the market delivered the technologies that made it possible.

But our desire for less waste may not yield to market forces, because the issue is complicated and our choices at the checkout may accidentally do more harm than good.



We can send that message on a more circuitous route only, through governments and pressure groups, and hope that they - and well-meaning industry initiatives - will work out some sensible answers.

It seems clear the solution will not be no packaging - it will be better packaging, dreamed up in research and development labs of the kind that gave us moisture-proof cellophane all those decades ago."

Our take home thoughts;

Plastic waste is awful but plastic isn't! What we need is a better and more understandable recycling system!

If everything gets reused in some way or another there's no waste, no problem.