

WORKING WITH PACKAGING SUPPLIERS

WHY MAKE THE SWITCH?

While implementing plastic free initiatives within your own operations can feel simpler, you can also have a positive impact working with suppliers to reduce single-use packaging.

From deliveries through to product packaging, there are many ways you can collaborate with your suppliers to reduce your combined environmental footprint.

OPPORTUNITIES TO WORK WITH SUPPLIERS

Milk kegs

Milk kegs are a great alternative to 1-2L milk bottles. They are large reusable containers that are supplied to you filled with milk. They are then plugged into a milk tap and you are able to pour milk directly from this to make your coffees.

Reusable crates and containers

You can ask your supplier to provide food items like vegetables, fruit, meat, seafood or baked goods in reusable crates or containers. Simply empty them directly into your fridge and return them straight back, or return them when they bring your next delivery.

Reusable coffee canisters

Some coffee roasters are able to provide their beans in reusable canisters. These can be returned and refilled.

Plastic wrapped merchandise

Items like t-shirts and hats don't need to be individually wrapped in a plastic bag. You can ask your supplier to provide them to you unwrapped.

Excess plastic packaging in mail orders

If you are finding that your mail deliveries are arriving in excessive packaging, you can work with your supplier to find reusable or plastic free alternatives.

HOW TO GET STARTED

Step 1 - Research best practice reusable alternatives

- [ ] Remember to check that solutions are practical and available in your region.

Step 2 - Reach out to your supplier to start a discussion

- [ ] When it comes to changing supplier packaging, how you ask makes all the difference. Start with a friendly conversation.
  - Let them know what your plastic-free priorities are.
  - Offer to help them avoid plastic packaging.
  - Suggest reusable alternatives.

Step 3 - Formalise your switch

- [ ] Follow up your call with an email or letter to confirm your process and get agreement. See page 3 for a template you can use for this purpose.

Step 4 - Implement your switch

- [ ] Work with your supplier to implement your reusable initiative.
- [ ] Monitor and adapt your approach as required.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- If you are switching to reusable packaging for food or drink items, remember to develop a wash-up system that works for both your supplier and you. If they have the resources, they can clean the crates and/or container, or you could.
- Always follow **best practice food health and safety standards** for cleaning and sanitising.
- Create a designated spot for returnable packaging. Label items clearly so staff know what goes back.
- Ensure deliveries pick up and rotate containers, not letting them stack up.
- Take a few weeks to track all the packaging that comes through your door. Note which items create the most waste - that's the place to start.
- Rather than trying to change everything at once, pick just one thing to focus on first.
- Smaller, local suppliers are more likely to consider reusable crates/containers as they don't rely on packing machinery and equipment to pack food.



SUPPLIER LETTER TEMPLATES

Initial letter template

You can use to contact your suppliers about your preferred reusable switches:

Dear [supplier name],

[Business name] is making the switch to reusables.

As part of this initiative we would like to reduce single-use packaging as much as possible. This is good for the environment and it helps us reduce our waste disposal costs.

We plan to order [insert goods] from you [on a regular basis/order date]. We would like to understand if you are able to supply these goods in:

- Reusable packaging that can be returned to you for re-use (preferred); or
- 100% compostable packaging that can be composted through our waste stream

Please let us know if this is possible. If so, we would be pleased to promote your role in the improved environmental outcomes of our island resort.

Kind regards,
[Name], [Title]

Follow up letter template

You can use to contact your suppliers to confirm what you discuss with them over the phone:

Dear [name of supplier],

Thanks for chatting about sustainable packaging options. As we discussed, [business name] is working to reduce our waste and we'd love your help.

We currently order [insert specific goods] from you [frequency]. Based on our chat, we'd like to try:

- [Be specific, e.g., "Delivery of baked goods without plastic packaging, starting next Tuesday"]
- [If applicable, a clear return process, e.g., "We'll empty the delivery containers and have them ready for your driver to collect with the next delivery"]

We propose to try this for four (4) weeks and see how it goes for both of us. We can always adjust the process as needed.

For any questions, just call [specific person] at [direct number]. Thanks for being part of our sustainability journey!

Kind regards,
[Name], [Title]