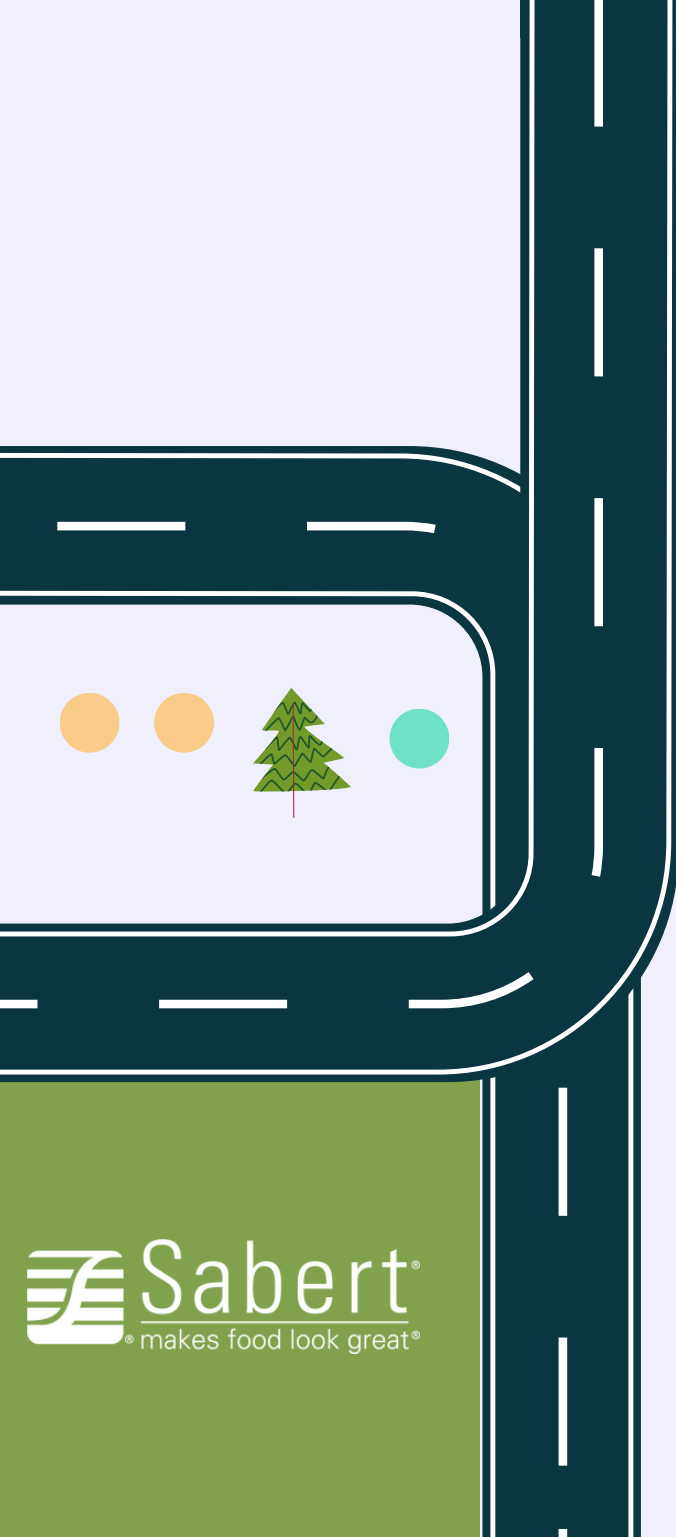




YOUR
Sustainable
**FOOD PACKAGING
ROADMAP**



Rising environmental concerns, shifting consumer preferences, and new regulations are pushing foodservice operators to reconsider their packaging choices – not just as an environmental necessity, but as a business decision that impacts their bottom line.

As our customers' trusted sustainable food packaging solutions provider, Sabert understands the importance of guiding distributors, restaurants, caterers, grocery stores, and national food chains through a seamless transition to sustainable packaging.

The path forward requires careful consideration of operational needs, costs, and performance requirements. By evaluating these factors alongside environmental impact, foodservice providers can develop packaging strategies that serve both practical needs and sustainability goals.

KEY BENEFITS OF *Sustainable Food Packaging*

- Reduce food waste through right-sized and better designed packaging
- Lower your carbon footprint with lighter materials and local sourcing
- Build customer trust by showing your commitment to sustainability
- Meet growing regulatory requirements while staying ahead of the curve



Every business is at a different point in its sustainable food packaging journey. While some foodservice operators are further down the road, others are struggling to figure out where to start.

Transitioning to eco-friendly packaging may seem challenging at first.

The key is to understand how sustainable food packaging fits within your operations, how it helps you get closer to achieving your sustainability goals, and how it can benefit your business.

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KNOW WHERE YOU STAND



A sustainable food packaging strategy isn't a one-size-fits-all approach. Before you begin your journey, it's important to understand where you are by evaluating existing practices.

This initial assessment will provide you with baseline data to identify immediate opportunities for improvement. Companies need to address and thoroughly examine their entire value chain - from sourcing raw materials to distribution and beyond - to have a meaningful impact.

As you conduct a sustainability audit of your packaging, consider these key components:

- Detailed inventory of current packaging materials and applications
- Analysis of packaging-related waste streams
- Evaluation of current supplier relationships and capabilities
- Assessment of operational constraints and requirements
- Review of customer feedback
- Know your local regulations

This is where you decide what success looks like for your business.

Start with establishing clear, achievable targets that can be measured. It's okay to start small and build from there.

You may adopt goals like these:

50% of packaging should be recyclable, compostable, or reusable within two years

Reduce virgin plastic use by 25% next year

Convert to compostable takeout containers by 2030

Reduce packaging waste by 30% in 18 months

SET YOUR GOALS

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CHOOSE YOUR MATERIALS



Before implementing a sustainable packaging strategy, it's important to understand that every solution will have a tradeoff.

The intent is to select the option that has minimal negative environmental impact without sacrificing quality and negatively impacting the consumer experience.

Each material choice carries distinct advantages and limitations that must be evaluated within the context of your specific operational needs.



Environmental Impact

Sustainable packaging can help reduce your carbon footprint and waste output. This matters to your customers and, increasingly, to regulatory bodies and stakeholders.

Operational Performance

Does your packaging need to be freezer- and refrigerator-safe? Does it need to be microwave- and oven-safe as well? Does it need to be strong and sturdy or lightweight and durable?

It's important to choose a substrate that meets performance requirements and addresses environmental goals. Sustainable packaging still needs to work for the specific food it holds and how that item will be consumed, regardless of its substrate.

Operators must consider the type of food, shelf life or freshness, temperature, refrigeration needs, heating or cooling needs, etc. If the solution isn't the best fit for use for the food, it could lead to an increase in food waste, negatively impacting sustainability goals.

Economic Considerations

Look beyond the cost of the packaging itself, and consider the total cost of ownership, including storage, transportation, and disposal.

While the benefits of sustainable packaging are evident, the upfront cost of sustainable packaging can be higher than traditional options.

The increase in cost can be attributed to:

- Sourcing of materials
- Supply chain and manufacturing processes
- Investment in new, advanced technologies and material science innovation

However, companies that transition to eco-friendly solutions often discover unexpected savings:

- Lighter materials cut shipping costs
- Better storage efficiency reduces warehouse space
- Improved durability means less product damage
- Enhanced brand reputation drives customer loyalty

MOLDED FIBER 101

Molded fiber or molded pulp is made from a variety of sustainable fibrous recycled materials like:

- Wood (Hardwoods / Softwoods)
- “Non-wood” Plants (Sugarcane, Bamboo, Cotton, Wheat, Miscanthus, etc.)
- Mineral or synthetic fibers (Polyester, Nylon, etc.)

These varied fiber sources create products with distinct physical properties, allowing manufacturers to tailor strength, texture, and durability to specific applications.

The manufacturing process requires specialized treatment to achieve the necessary performance characteristics. During production, additives are incorporated into the fiber slurry to provide water and grease resistance - essential properties for food packaging applications.

Modern PFAS-free formulations ensure these protective qualities while maintaining environmental safety standards.

BENEFITS

- Made from sustainable materials
- Superior nesting delivers transportation cost efficiencies
- Can be recycled or disposed safely through composting
- Reinforces brand values



PAPER 101

Paper-based food packaging encompasses a wide array of paper varieties, including:

- Uncoated
- Corrugated
- Coated
- Bleached
- Paperboard

Each paper type serves specific needs in foodservice. For instance, corrugated structures offer extra strength through multiple layers of paper. This layering creates robust insulation and durability than single-sheet alternatives.

Modern paper packaging overcomes traditional moisture limitations through specialized coatings and linings. These treatments allow paper containers to handle everything from hot french fries to frozen meals, with storage times ranging from thirty minutes to several days. Many options now work in both microwaves and ovens, expanding their versatility.

BENEFITS



Cost-effective



Recyclability



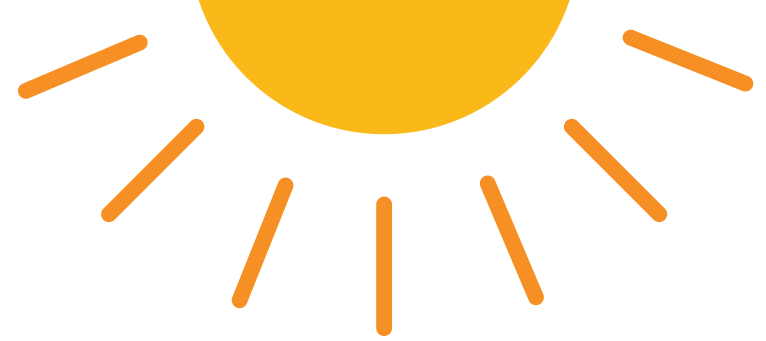
Lightweight



Microwave (PP lined) and possibly oven capable, depending on application



Exceptional printing capabilities



PLASTICS 101

Plastic is one of the most versatile manufacturing materials, offering unmatched benefits in durability and food preservation. Its inherent properties - water resistance, leak prevention, and lightweight nature - make it particularly effective for foodservice applications. These characteristics, combined with cost efficiency, explain the widespread adoption across the industry.

Recent innovations in plastic technology have produced new generations of sustainable solutions that maintain plastic's beneficial properties while addressing environmental concerns. These advanced materials offer improved end-of-life outcomes without sacrificing performance.

FEATURES



Exceptional moisture and grease resistance



Reduced material usage through advanced design



Superior product protection capabilities



Increased post-consumer recycled content integration



Lightweight / efficient packing to reduce freight impacts



Look at the Whole Package

Sustainable packaging design considers the environmental impact throughout its entire lifecycle. It's not just about the materials. It's about responsible production and logistics, consumer awareness and education, and end-of-life management.

Consider how your packaging choices affect:



Manufacturing Impact

- Energy consumption in packaging production footprint
- Water conservation and waste reduction
- Environmental practices of your supply chain partners

End-of-Life Management

- Compatibility with existing recycling systems
- Availability of composting infrastructure
- Ease of material separation

Logistics

- Cube utilization in shipping containers and trucks
- Weight optimization for fuel efficiency
- Stackability
- Protection requirements during transit
- Modal transport options and their environmental impact

TIP

Work with your food packaging suppliers to conduct a life cycle assessment (LCA), which will provide detailed insights into environmental impacts associated with different packaging options, aiding in informed decision-making.

While it's important to take some substantial steps forward, no one says you have to take them all at the same time or in a certain order.

Many businesses begin with high-impact, low-barrier changes—like switching to recyclable takeout containers in their highest-volume categories. This approach lets you test what works while managing costs effectively.

Before a full-scale launch, it's essential to validate and test the packaging solutions to ensure food quality is maintained in all stages from your kitchen to the end consumer.



START SMALL AND SCALE SMART



A phased implementation strategy can be as simple as this:

- Pilot program
- Gradual transition
- Full-scale implementation





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CONTINUOUSLY IMPROVE

Whether it's emerging technologies, regulatory changes, or ongoing innovation, the sustainable packaging landscape is constantly evolving. It's important to leave room for adjustment.

Taking a dynamic approach to sustainable packaging will enable you to regularly assess your packaging strategies to ensure you are delivering on your goals and providing the optimal customer experience.



TIP

Make sure to engage your packaging solutions provider to stay informed about the latest material innovations and legislative measures so you can ensure you are on the right track.



Regular customer feedback

Benchmarking against industry standards and business sustainability goals

Cost analysis impact

Operational efficiency metrics

EDUCATE



Adopting a sustainable packaging strategy is not the end of your journey. You can help close the significant consumer education gap.

Many people are unsure how to properly dispose of packaging at its end of life. Foodservice operators can play an important role in educating consumers, empowering them to make informed choices, and turning them into advocates for responsible disposal and recycling.

Whether it's implementing a composting program with well-placed bins and clear signage, or collaborating with local recycling facilities to improve collection systems, businesses have an opportunity to create meaningful change while cultivating deeper customer relationships.



Keep a Lid on It

Did you know that separating containers and lids at disposal reduces the ability to recycle?

When foodservice containers enter the waste stream without their corresponding lids, multiple inefficiencies in the recycling process are created. Separated lids frequently become categorized as "small-format plastics" in materials recovery facilities (MRFs).

Due to their size, these items often fall through sorting screens or become misdirected during the separation process, resulting in their diversion to landfills instead of being recycled.

Keeping the lids on provides several operational advantages in recycling facilities:

1. Enhanced sortation accuracy
2. Reduced contamination of other recycling streams
3. Improved material recovery rates
4. More efficient processing through automated systems

SPREAD THE WORD



Clear Signage

Simple messages like "Please keep lids on containers when recycling" can go a long way.



Staff Training

Employees who understand the importance of proper recycling can become environmental ambassadors.



Packaging Considerations

Partner with your food packaging solutions provider to choose containers that prioritize recyclable materials, and correct lids for a secure fit.



Packer-Processor Customer Story

CUSTOMER NEED

A packer-processor was looking to transition away from 100% virgin polypropylene (PP) black and white containers in an effort to meet its sustainability goals of virgin plastic reduction.

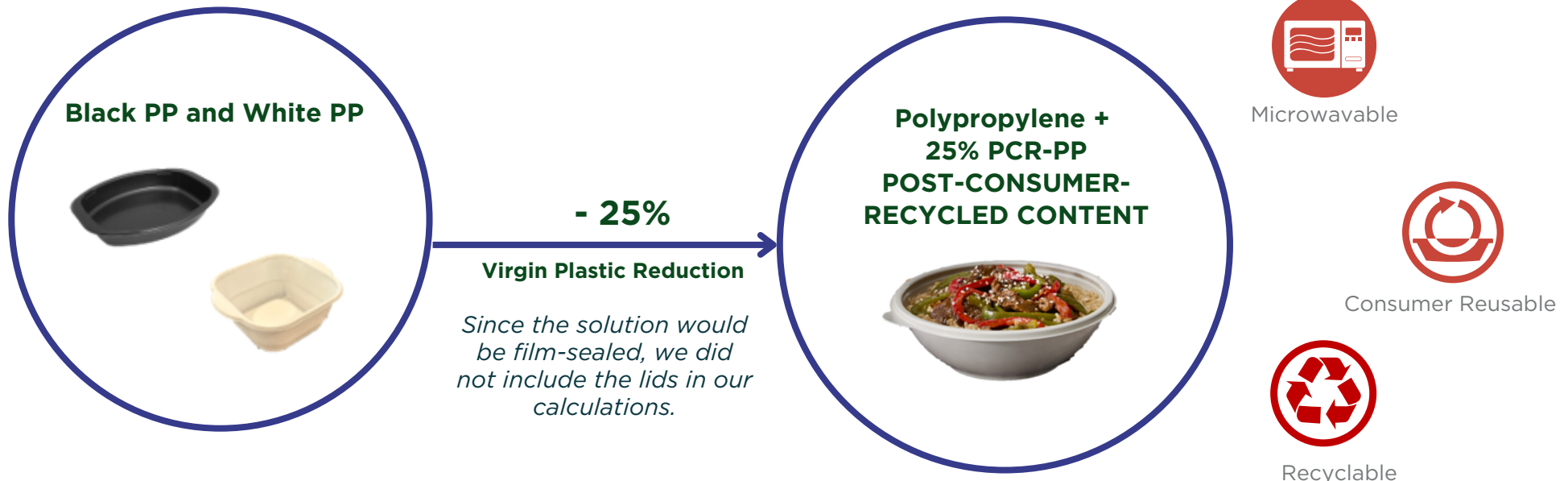
Due to the fit for use needs, it was critical that the alternative solution met performance requirements while also preserving and protecting food.

THE JOURNEY

From concept to commercialization, it was imperative that we designed and engineered the ideal solution for the customer's unique requirements and applications.

THE SOLUTION

To reduce virgin plastic, we introduced 25% PCR content, which was tested to meet critical performance metrics, such as microwavable use, as well as help to meet their sustainability target for reducing virgin plastic.



Grocery/Supermarket

Customer Story

CUSTOMER NEED

A grocery retailer was interested in exploring how to transition from a PET clamshell package to a more sustainable option for their salad program. They were looking for ways to reduce plastic use overall to address their sustainability goals and consumer demands for more eco-friendly practices.



THE JOURNEY

The success of the retailer's salad program was in part due to the merchandising of the menu items. As we offered alternative solutions, we wanted to ensure that we solved for a reduction in plastic while ensuring the product was merchandised appropriately.

We conducted a thorough life cycle assessment (LCA) comparing Sabert's 24 oz. Paper Square Bowl packaging with clear PET lid to a PET Clamshell.

THE SOLUTION

The benefits of the Paper Square Bowl were that it offered a fiber-based base with superior performance, and it was readily recyclable through paper recycling streams, signaling to consumers the commitment to minimizing environmental impacts.

When compared, the new solution would **avoid 608 Metric Tonnes of CO₂e in GHG emissions and 181,500 kg plastic use per 5,500,000 units.**

Not only did the new solution cut in half the amount of virgin or recycled plastic being used by switching to a paperboard base, but the upscale look and feel of the Paper Square Bowls proved to attract consumers to the shelf and **fuel sales growth by 30% and unit growth by 14% versus the previous year.**

The enhanced value perception of the new solution also supported a higher price point.

Restaurant

Customer Story

CUSTOMER NEED

A Mediterranean restaurant chain was looking to replace its polystyrene (PS) takeout packaging due to increased environmental regulations surrounding the material.

THE JOURNEY

While the operator was required to limit the use of PS in its food packaging, they did not want to sacrifice food quality and the customer experience. Due to the restaurant's diverse menu offerings, including French fries, saucy dishes, bowls, and salads, the food packaging solution needed to be versatile enough to meet a variety of fit for use requirements.

THE SOLUTION

We suggested our Pulp Ultra™ containers, a breakthrough line of coated molded fiber solutions engineered to provide the ultimate resistance against moisture, oil and grease.

Not only were Pulp Ultra™ containers sustainable and compostable, but they also provide a high level of protection across all temperature ranges, ensuring optimal product performance.

The restaurant also likes the natural look of the solution as it complements its menu items and enables the bright colors of the ingredients to pop, enhancing the dining occasion.



YOUR SUSTAINABLE FOOD PACKAGING JOURNEY STARTS WITH



At Sabert, we believe that our commitment to the environment is a fundamental part of our core business philosophy -- that a more sustainable future helps our customers, our industry, our communities and our planet.

Across all of our facilities, partners, plants and people, we're putting our inventive culture to work to help find new ways to protect the environment, strengthen communities and drive responsible growth - every day.

For packaging options, or for more information, visit
www.sabert.com or call **1(800) 722-3781**.

