



# Global Protocol on Packaging Sustainability 2.0

## Frequently Asked Questions

A global project by



The Consumer Goods  
**FORUM**  
The Global Network Serving  
Shopper & Consumer Needs

## WHAT

### 1- What is the GPPS?

GPPS stands for Global Protocol on Packaging Sustainability. The GPPS enables the consumer goods industry to better assess the relative sustainability of packaging. It has two elements:

The **Framework**: “A global language for Packaging and Sustainability – a framework and measurement system for our industry” which offers a common/harmonized language and describes the platform for the system;

The **Protocol**: the “Global Protocol on Packaging Sustainability” describes metrics and indicators for the sustainability of packaging;

These documents are available free of charge at <http://globalpackaging.mycgforum.com>. A webinar presenting the framework and system will be staged on 4 October 2011.

### 2- Is there a background document explaining the GPPS?

The document entitled “A Global Language for Packaging and Sustainability, A Framework and a Measurement System for our Industry” explains the background, goals, and how packaging can contribute to improving sustainability. It can be found at <http://globalpackaging.mycgforum.com>. A webinar presenting the framework and system will be staged on 4 October 2011.

### 3- What does GPPS stand for and who is responsible for it?

GPPS stands for Global Protocol on Packaging Sustainability. The latest version is 2.0 published in September of 2011. It is maintained by the Consumer Goods Forum (CGF), a global network of CEOs from over 650 manufacturers, retailers, service providers and other stakeholders across 70 countries. The CGF has a Sustainability Pillar that leads the work on packaging sustainability. More information can be found at <http://globalpackaging.mycgforum.com>.

### 4- What companies were involved in developing the GPPS and the metrics it uses?

The Consumer Goods Forum has over 650 retailers, manufacturers, service providers and other stakeholders across 70 countries. The project that was first initiated to deliver the GPPS was the Global Packaging Project, which gathered about 100 companies who worked together with experts in packaging and sustainability to define the metrics and run pilot implementations to test their usefulness. The Protocol was designed collectively by a diverse group of retailers and manufacturers aided by packaging material suppliers and packaging manufacturers and led by a steering team that included representatives from retailers Wal-Mart, Target and Tesco, and manufacturers Kraft Foods, Procter & Gamble, Nestlé and Unilever. It is based on earlier packaging sustainability guidelines developed by the European Organization for Packaging and the Environment (EUROPEN) with ECR Europe and similar work on metrics for packaging developed by Green Blue's Sustainable Packaging Coalition (SPC) in the United States.

### **5- For which business sectors was the GPPS developed – is B2B included for example?**

The GPPS was developed for businesses operating within the Consumer Goods sector and its packaging industries. B2B communications is one of the areas the GPPS hopes to facilitate, but results can also be used for internal company communications or communications with consumers and other stakeholders.

### **6- For what type of packaging was the GPPS developed?**

The protocol was developed primarily for packaging consumer goods but can be equally used for packaging of all types of goods.

### **7- Is this the final system or will it be upgraded/updated in the future?**

The Consumer Goods Forum plans to update the GPPS and the Framework whenever it is relevant to do so. The latest versions will be made available at <http://globalpackaging.mycgforum.com>.

### **8- The GPPS appears to be complex and overwhelming. Will there be a “light” version of it?**

Much work was put into the documents to make them as accessible as possible. No lighter version is planned but note that use of the protocol can range from a simple analysis (using a limited number of indicators) for tracking a change to a full system design and analysis. The business question asked will dictate the degree of complexity.

### **9- How much does it cost to get the GPPS?**

The GPPS and the Framework document are all free of charge and available from the Consumer Goods Forum website at <http://globalpackaging.mycgforum.com>.

### **10- Where do I get the documents?**

Go to <http://globalpackaging.mycgforum.com>.

### **11- Is there a difference between the GPPS metrics and the (draft) ISO standards on packaging and the environment?**

Yes. The GPPS metrics are not a standard, and the ISO standards contain no metrics. The two documents are however compatible as several of the GPPS environmental attributes are based on ISO standards and European (CEN) Standards (EN 13427 – 13432). The GPPS is not intended to replace any of the existing standards and guidelines which still need to be adhered to in any external communication related to sustainability performance of packaging and products. The GPPS uses pre-existing internationally recognised metrics where these exist.

## WHY

### **12- Why would my company choose the GPPS for (a part of) its packaging sustainability strategy?**

The intention is to have a unified language for discussing sustainability of packaging. The Consumer Goods Forum represents over 650 companies, it is important to have one common system. The GPPS ensures that the detailed dialogue between trading partners is based on common terms, measures and values. For each metric there is a clear definition, some examples, usage guidance and links to existing industry protocols where available. Intended benefits include increased efficiency, better cost control, improved decision making, easier relationships and better communication with a multitude of stakeholders. In addition, companies learn about how their packaging can have reduced environmental impact and monitor their progress.

### **13- Why was the GPPS developed? Aren't existing systems enough?**

The GPPS was developed as the result of having identified a need for clear and unified guidelines to help corporate decision makers form balanced and informed views about the role of packaging in sustainable development. Intended benefits include increased efficiency, better cost control, improved decision making, easier relationships and better communication with a multitude of stakeholders. In addition, companies learn about how their packaging can have reduced environmental impact and monitor their progress. The GPPS does not reinvent a new system, it uses existing methods and definitions whenever possible. Choosing the GPPS ensures that your dialogue with trading partners is based on a defined set of common terms, measures and values. For each metric there is a clear definition, some examples, usage guidance and links to existing industry protocols where available.

### **14- Are the GPPS metrics a standard?**

Not in the sense that it has been developed by a standard body but it is the Common Language for Packaging and Sustainability as proposed by the Consumer Goods Forum companies.

### **15- Will a GPPS replace existing scorecards for packaging to eliminate duplication and facilitate their harmonization?**

It was not the intention of the project to establish an industry scorecard. It is hoped that any company or organisation that develops a scorecard relating to sustainability and packaging would use the GPPS Measurement System metrics and indicators within their scorecard. In this way companies working with packaging can have a harmonized way of discussing sustainability of packaging. As more and more companies begin to use the GPPS, it is believed that this will become the preferred way of discussing sustainability issues for packaging for reasons of simplicity integrity and efficiency.

### **16- Who will use (or is using) the GPPS metrics and for what?**

All stakeholders of the supply chain can use it. The business questions that can be answered by using the GPPS include comparing two or more packaging solutions, assessing part of the packaging process, supplier contributions, etc. The analysis can

range from a simple analysis (limited number of indicators) for tracking a change; to optimization analysis for a given functional unit; to comparative analysis of one or more packaging formats/materials/process; to full system design and analysis.

### **17- Why is it called a global protocol on packaging sustainability and not on 'sustainable packaging'?**

There is no such thing as an actual 'sustainable package'. Packaging can however be an integral part of a sustainability strategy and thus contribute to sustainability. The GPPS serves as a common ground for discussing sustainability of packaging across multiple stakeholders.

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

### **18- What benefits does my company gain by using/implementing this protocol - what's in it for us?**

It will simplify discussions on sustainability of packaging with your partners. A harmonized way of measuring metrics prevents misunderstandings and work duplication. Intended benefits include increased efficiency, better cost control, improved decision making, easier relationships and better communication with a multitude of stakeholders. Also, users will learn how their packaging contributes to reduced environmental impact and data from using the metrics can be the benchmark to measure progress towards achieving company goals for more sustainable packaging.

### **19- Can implementing the GPPS help my company to communicate sustainability to consumers? suppliers? vendors?**

The GPPS includes a common language and gives a harmonized system for sustainable metrics. This offers a platform which simplifies communicating with all stakeholders. Additionally, within the Sustainability pillar of the Consumer Goods Forum a 'glossary' work stream is developing a set of common terms relating to sustainability that can be used for consumer communication.

### **20- Do all my packaging-related business partners have to agree to use this system before my company can implement it? I.e., is there a prerequisite that a minimum number of partners implement GPPS for the system to work?**

The GPPS can be implemented by one or by several partners; there is no prerequisite that other partners implement the GPPS for it to work for your company. Depending on the business questions you have chosen, you pick the metrics you want to measure. This information as well as the documentation about GPPS can then be shared with your business partners so that you use the same terms and definitions. The GPPS offers a harmonized way of calculating and presenting data, which should facilitate collaboration. To begin with, you do not need prior approval from other partners and partner participation is not an explicit prerequisite. However, the greater the number of partners you have that decide to also follow the GPPS, the easier your communication will be.

### **21- How does my company decide what metrics to use?**

The selection of metrics depends entirely on the business question you want to analyse and the sustainability strategy and goal the company has set for itself. The number of metrics can range from a single one to all of them depending on how extensive you want your analysis to be. The analysis can range from a simple analysis (limited number of indicators) for tracking a change; to optimization analysis for a given functional unit; to comparative analysis of one or more packaging formats/materials/process; to full system design and analysis. You may also want to consider what you need from other stakeholders or what you want to communicate to help you decide.

### **22- Can you give me an example of what is meant by 'business decision' that drives the use of the GPPS?**

Example A: Cosmetic products in the EU are mostly distributed in channels which do not request shelf-ready packaging, meaning that the standard outer cases are American Boxes. Business Question: Would shelf-ready packaging lead to a higher or a lower level of sustainability?

Example B: Business Question: What is the impact of different materials (glass vs. plastic) on the CO2 footprint?

Example C: Business Question: Will offering multiple formats (for the same functional unit) affect the sustainability of the packaging?

### **23- Is it compulsory to use all the metrics?**

No, the number of metrics depends on the business question and how extensive you want the analysis to be.

### **24- Do we need LCA tools in order to use the GPPS metrics?**

Not for all metrics. Some GPPS metrics are based on LCA methods and for these, LCA tools will help.

### **25- Who is in charge of collecting the information for a given product?**

This must be decided internally within your company. It is recommended to collect not only the information necessary for metrics but to document the source of that information as well. This will facilitate tracking progress. Any uncertainty about data or its source should be documented.

### **26- Is there an automated way to exchange GPPS metrics for a product with trading partners?**

The work to provide this is currently ongoing at GS1. Companies who would like to know more or who are interested in joining this effort can contact GS1 or the Consumer Goods Forum at <http://globalpackaging.mycgforum.com>.

### **27- Why are indicators like “discrimination” and “child labour” important for packaging sustainability?**

Because companies that do not respect child labour laws or that discriminate cannot in the long run be contributing to sustainable practices and thus do not contribute to packaging sustainability. Sustainability takes into account not only economic and environmental factors but social factors too. The GPPS encourages companies to follow prevailing corporate social responsibility guidelines.

### **28- Are any metrics mandatory?**

No, metrics should be chosen to best fit the business questions you have and to facilitate discussions, either internally or with other business partners and consumers.

### **29- What are the data quality objectives for the data that I must collect?**

The data quality should be high enough to support confidence in the decisions that you plan to make with the information. Higher quality will lead to more confidence.

### **30- I don't have primary data for my entire package. Part of the data is primary but the rest is based on industry averages. What do I do?**

Use primary data where you have them, but substitute industry average data where needed. Depending on the business objectives and key questions to answer, industry average data may be as good as or better than primary, depending also on their quality. In both cases however it is important to be transparent about which sources are used.

### **31- Do I use primary data or industry average data?**

Use primary data whenever you have it.

### **32- How do I measure primary data?**

Primary data emanates directly from measurements done of the specific operations in your company that are relevant to your business question, or of your own supply chain. Secondary data (or industry average data) comes from databases like Ecoinvent, GaBi, Plastics Europe, and IDEMAT.

### **33- How do I get industry average data?**

Industry average data (secondary data) can be found in several databases: Ecoinvent, GaBi, Plastics Europe, and IDEMAT.

### **34- Can I use old data? How old is too old?**

Age of data is one of many factors that influence its representativeness. Age is only a problem if the underlying circumstances have changed significantly enough to doubt that the data is a reasonable representation of the current system. Therefore “too old” depends on how stable the production processes have been. Just as transparency is important with regard to source of date, this is equally the case in respect of its age.

### **35- At what level can I ignore things in the package - e.g. additives, label...?**

The goal is to be as comprehensive as possible. If it is at a level that has a significant impact then it should be reported.

Often in LCA, a component contributing less than 1% of the expected impact might be chosen to be omitted. If public communication is not an immediate goal of your project, you may consider omitting any items that you are reasonably confident will not cause a change in the results. It should be kept in mind that a rough estimation is often possible using generic data and this might be preferred to omitting components.

### **36- Do I get data from multiple suppliers and if I do, how do I report that?**

If collecting from multiple sources, a weighted average is preferred, so that the result indicates the average for your material supply.

### **37- I received data in a format I can't use, what do I do?**

Express your data in the functional unit that you decided upon;  
Ask the data provider to change format;  
Make and document any assumptions that are needed to manipulate the data into the desired format (for example, if weight is needed you may need to assume a density to convert from volume).

## **RESOURCES**

### **38- Does the GPPS have a website with links to all the documents and resources?**

Yes, all the most recent versions of the GPPS, the Framework and supporting documents can be found on the Consumer Goods Forum website at <http://globalpackaging.mycgforum.com>.

### **39- Where do I find the data I need to calculate the metrics?**

Data for calculating the metrics can be from many different sources and it is important for work that will be ongoing year to year that the source of the data be noted for each metric. Databases, both public and company-owned are a good source. Suppliers and other business partners can provide some information.

### **40- Where can I learn more about the GPPS so that I can implement it into my company?**

A webinar will be held on 4 October 2011. The resources can be found at <http://globalpackaging.mycgforum.com>.

### **41- Who can I talk to if I have further questions about the GPPS? Is there a helpdesk?**

You can send an email to [r.hagedorn@theconsumergoodsforum.com](mailto:r.hagedorn@theconsumergoodsforum.com).