

The new Market Update section of Food Manufacturing is designed to offer our readers insight toward critical industry trends and issues. We received many helpful responses to this month's reader survey on Packaging Waste Reduction. Please be on the lookout next month for our email survey on HACCP and let your opinions be heard in the pages of Food Manufacturing!

Trying to stay afloat during tough current economic times requires multiple strategies on the part of food manufacturers. One viable opportunity for cost savings is packaging waste reduction.

A recent survey of Food Manufacturing readers found that 53 percent work for companies that have altered the packaging of their individual products in the past two years in order to facilitate a more sustainable design. 67 percent of the same surveyed companies have also altered the packaging used when shipping products in the last two years.

The driving factor behind packaging waste reduction is, not surprisingly, motivated by the desire to save money on packaging materials (54 percent). However, companies also made waste reductions for varying other reasons, including:

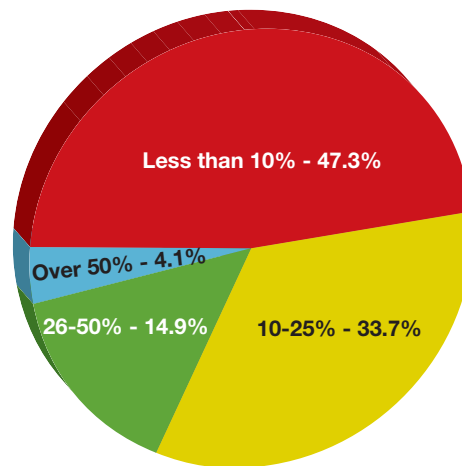
- To reduce the quantity of waste in the plant
- To support eco-friendly marketing campaigns
- To increase shipping efficiency

Respondents were split when it came to paying more for environmentally-friendly "eco-packaging"- 52 percent said they were willing to spend a little more for environmental purposes, while 48

percent were not.

Numerous, different efforts to reduce packaging waste were reported. The most common of which was a change or reduction in shipping materials (24 percent). Others reported a reduction of packaging material per individual product, a change in packaging material type, as well as an effort to package products in larger quantities. The majority of plants (47 percent) reported that only ten percent of their plant's waste is pack-

In your estimation, what percentage of your plant's waste is packaging materials?

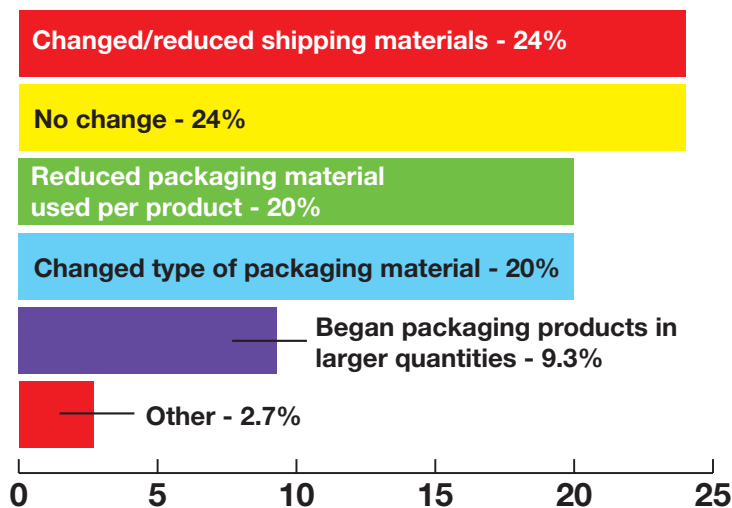


aging-related. To the other extreme, 4 percent reported that over 50 percent of their plant's waste is packaging-related.

The most common packaging material found in food manufacturing plants was corrugated boxes (91 percent), followed by plastics and paper. While only 3 percent report packaging with perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA), 31 percent report being aware of the controversy surrounding its use. PFOA, most commonly used in product packaging to prevent food from sticking, has been under fire from environmental and health agencies because of the chemical's tendency to build up in the blood stream of humans, and its toxicity to animals.

It is clear that many food manufacturers are looking for cost-cutting advantages and are finding them in their packaging waste. There are a multitude of resources available to manufacturers looking for waste reduction tips. Sources of assistance range from retailers such as Wal-Mart (30 percent of respondents reported utilizing Wal-Mart's "Packaging Scorecard" to determine how their packaging sustainability matches up against that of other companies) to agencies such as the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). ♦

What types of packaging changes has your company made in the past five years?



Which of the following materials does your company use for product packaging? (check all that apply)

