

WASTE AND PACKAGING

Background

The UK Commercial and Industrial sector produces an estimated 48 million tonnes of waste per year. The retail sector is the largest contributor, generating some 9 million tonnes¹. In addition, the sector contributes 6.7 million tonnes of food waste to the 26.5 million tonnes of waste generated by UK households each year. It is estimated that 60% of food disposed by households – approximately one-third of food purchased – could have been eaten².

Total packaging produced by the retail sector has remained stable at approximately 2.9 million tonnes between 2007 and 2009³.

Public awareness of waste and packaging issues is growing. Over the last 10 years there has been a year-on-year reduction in waste sent to landfill by households, and a three-fold increase in household recycling⁴.

Materiality and strategy

The majority of The Co-operative's waste is associated with The Co-operative Food, and the waste generated by its 2,900 stores. CFS and the Group head office complex are the main generators of office waste.

Waste and packaging is a major area of focus in the new Ethical Operating Plan (page 13). In the latest ethical policy consultations for the food, banking and investments businesses, members and customers indicated their wish for the business to pursue measures that promote sustainable waste management.

The Co-operative's approach to operational waste management follows the established waste hierarchy of reduce, reuse and recycle. The Packaging Policy, for own-brand food products, prioritises absolute packaging reductions and governs acceptable packaging materials, based on food safety and environmental considerations⁵.

Climate change

Waste and packaging

Water

Biodiversity

Chemicals

Targets 2010	Progress	Targets 2011
Indicator: Waste reduced		
Extend the consolidation of waste management contracts across The Co-operative to further improve accounting systems for general and recycled waste streams.	✓ The accuracy of the waste to landfill tonnage for Pharmacy, Travel and Food has improved following a consolidation of waste management contracts for these businesses (page 74).	
Reduce total waste arising and maintain a 70% reuse/recycling rate across CFS' main offices, excluding the Britannia estate.	✓ CFS (excluding Britannia) reduced its waste arising by 158 tonnes and maintained a stable reuse/recycling rate above 70% (pages 74 and 76).	Reduce total waste arisings and maintain a 70% reuse/recycling rate across CFS' main offices, including Britannia.
Reduce the carbon impact of The Co-operative Food's packaging by 10% by 2012, compared with 2009 ⁶ .	= A number of reductions in the environmental impact of own-brand packaging were developed in 2010 (page 75).	EOP In addition to the 15% weight reductions achieved in packaging, reduce the carbon impact of The Co-operative Food's packaging by 10% by 2012, compared with 2009 ⁷ .
		EOP Reduce the number of carrier bags used by The Co-operative Food by 75% by 2013.
Indicator: Waste reused/recycled		
Increase the amount of cardboard and polythene recycled by The Co-operative Food.	✓ Although the volume of tonnes recycled decreased slightly when compared with 2009, this was due to an increased use of reusable crates, which has reduced the total amount of cardboard waste generated (page 75).	
Indicator: Waste disposed		
Maintain less than 50% of total waste arisings being sent to landfill from The Co-operative Food.	✓ In 2010, 40% of total waste arising was sent to landfill or for disposal (page 77).	EOP Ensure that the vast majority of operational waste is diverted away from landfill by 2013, and expand work with Fareshare on food waste.

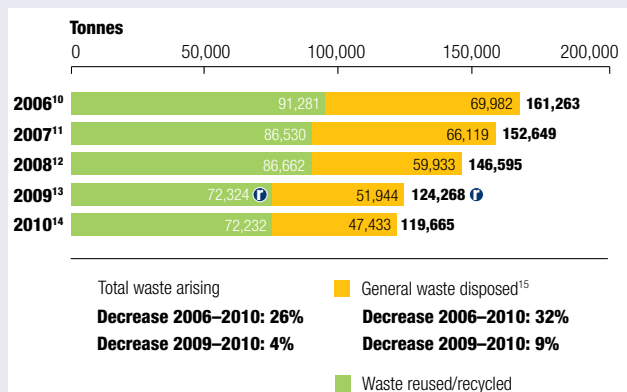
WASTE AND PACKAGING

Total waste

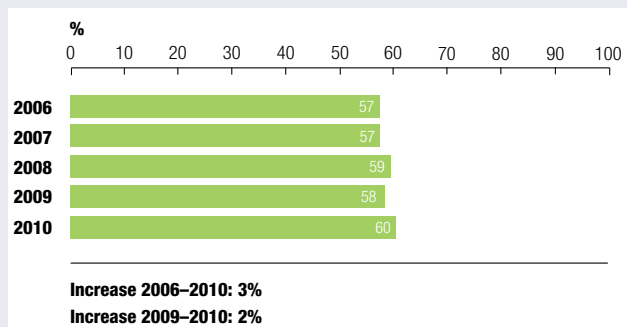
In 2010, total reported waste arisings and general waste disposed⁸ were 119,665 tonnes (2009: 124,268 tonnes) and 47,433 tonnes (2009: 51,944 tonnes), representing a reduction of 4% and 9% respectively when compared to 2009, and 26% and 32% respectively when compared with 2006. Meanwhile, the reuse/recycle rate increased by 2% compared to 2009, and 3% compared to 2006.

🎯 In 2010, the accuracy of the waste to landfill tonnage for The Co-operative Pharmacy, Travel and Food improved due to a consolidation of waste management contracts for these businesses. In line with its target, CFS continued to reduce its waste in 2010, and maintained a 70% recycling rate across its head office⁹.

Total waste arising



Proportion of waste reused/recycled



Reducing waste

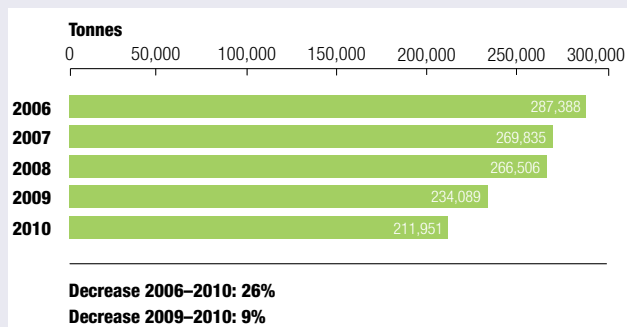
Total primary packaging (own-brand and branded)

Total primary packaging levels¹⁶ at The Co-operative Food¹⁷ (own-brand and branded) have reduced by 22,138 tonnes (9%) since 2009, and 75,437 tonnes (26%) since 2006.

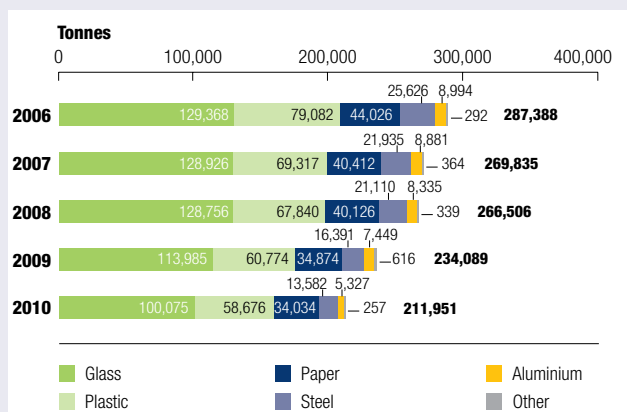
Reduction in total primary packaging

26% reduction in total primary packaging since 2006

Total primary packaging handled¹⁸



Primary packaging handled by material¹⁹



Reducing own-brand packaging

In 2009, The Co-operative Food achieved its target to reduce own-brand primary packaging by 15% – one year ahead of schedule²⁰ – achieving an estimated total reduction of 16% (15,403 tonnes).

A new target has now been set to reduce the carbon impact of packaging by 10% by 2012 based on 2009 levels. This is in line with the focus of the industry-wide initiative Courtauld II²¹, to which The



Co-operative has pledged its commitment. Courtauld II extends the focus of the original Courtauld agreement on packaging reduction, to include the carbon impact of packaging, as well as UK household food waste and waste in the supply chain. In 2010, an 11% reduction (15,051 tonnes) in the weight of own-brand packaging was achieved, compared to 2009²².

Specific reductions in own-brand packaging developed in 2010 include:

Initiative	Projected annual savings (tonnes)
Reduction in the weight of own-brand Californian wine bottles	530 glass
Change from plastic lids to pre-printed film on soft fruits.	221 plastic
Change from paper labels to pre-printed film on pre-packaged tomatoes.	181 paper
Reduction in the thickness of potato plastic bags.	34 plastic
Reduction in the thickness of box packaging on whole dates.	6 plastic

Food waste

To help customers reduce food waste, storage instructions for fruit and vegetables are included on loose fresh produce bags. For example, messages on banana packaging are designed to encourage customers to store the fruit at room temperature, rather than in the refrigerator.

In early 2011, The Co-operative committed to work further with charities, such as Fareshare, to help reduce food waste.

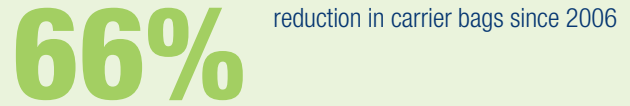
Carrier bags

The number of single-use carrier bags distributed to customers has been reduced by 66% (2009: 63%) compared to 2006, representing over one billion carrier bags avoided. These reductions have been achieved through a number of initiatives, including re-use messages on carrier bags; the launch of a reusable Fairtrade cotton carrier bag; and the removal of single-use bags from prominent display at checkouts.

In early 2011, a new target was set to reduce the number of carrier bags used by The Co-operative Food by 75% by 2013.



Reductions in carrier bags



Reusing waste

Reusable crates

The use of reusable plastic crates for transportation and display of fresh produce and some meat products enabled The Co-operative Food to save an estimated 10,788 tonnes of cardboard in 2010 (2009: 5,422 tonnes).

IT equipment

In 2010, CFS donated, or sold for reuse, 23 tonnes of IT equipment (2009: 15 tonnes), including monitors, PCs, laptops and printers. Donated items were sent to charities, such as Digital Links International and the NSPCC. In addition, head office passed 32 tonnes of IT equipment (2009: 12 tonnes) to their asset management contractor for reuse.

Recycling waste

In 2010, The Co-operative reused/recycled 72,232 tonnes of waste (2009: 72,349 tonnes), representing 60% of total waste arising (2009: 58%).

Waste reused/recycled 2010



Cardboard and polythene

Cardboard and polythene represent approximately 86% of waste reused/recycled. In 2010 some 62,084 (2009: 63,250) tonnes were reused/recycled²³. Although this is a slight reduction compared with 2009, it can be accounted for by the increased use of reusable crates (see above), which has reduced the amount of cardboard waste generated by stores.

The Co-operative recycling centre

Head office paper and cardboard are recycled through a recycling centre based at the Manchester head office complex. In 2010, the centre recycled a total of 984 tonnes (2009: 761 tonnes) of The Co-operative's waste²⁴.

Packaging regulations

Under the Producer Responsibility Obligations (Packaging Waste) Regulations 2007²⁵, The Co-operative is obligated to determine how much packaging material (across six categories) it passes on to customers, and to produce evidence of a set amount of recycling and recovery²⁶. The Co-operative maintains compliance with these regulations on behalf of much of the UK retail Co-operative Movement.

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Recycled content and recyclability of product packaging

Two own-brand products – 100% recycled toilet tissue and kitchen towels – are made from waste paper supplied by The Co-operative Recycling Centre. Recycled materials are also used in product packaging, including the majority of green glass wine bottles, washing powder boxes and certain tissue boxes. All new hand



baskets at The Co-operative Food are made from 100% recycled plastic.

The majority of The Co-operative Food's own-brand products now carry a packaging recycling logo. The logo was developed by WRAP and the British Retail Consortium, working with UK retailers, including The Co-operative. Use of this logo is voluntary; however, it is hoped that the use of a single, industry-wide logo will minimise customer confusion over which materials can be recycled.



In 2010, The Co-operative entailed total obligations of 98,259 tonnes. This included obligations in all six material categories: paper (14,839 tonnes), glass (50,504 tonnes), aluminium (1,377 tonnes), steel (6,097 tonnes), plastic (11,808 tonnes) and wood (4 tonnes), and a balanced recycling and recovery obligation of 13,630 tonnes²⁷. These recycling obligations were met through the purchase of Packaging Recovery Notes (PRNs), largely from the Veolia compliance scheme.

Electricals

In accordance with the introduction of the Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) Regulations²⁸, producers and retailers in the UK are responsible for financing the environmentally sound disposal of WEEE.

The Co-operative entails obligations as both a producer and distributor of electrical and electronic equipment. It is a member of the Valpak producer compliance scheme and the retailer take-back scheme²⁹. WEEE generated by The Co-operative's business activities will be taken back for recovery, reuse or recycling by its suppliers.

In 2010, The Co-operative recycled 3,156 tonnes of WEEE, including 3,102 tonnes (47,725 items) of electrical equipment taken back at its end of life from The Co-operative Electrical customers³⁰.

Batteries

Under the Waste Batteries and Accumulators Regulations 2009, The Co-operative Food entails obligations as a distributor of batteries, and each store has a battery bin to take back waste portable batteries of any brand and size from customers. In 2010, 11 tonnes of batteries were recycled through stores. The Co-operative Food is classed as a small producer of batteries and is not required to join a Battery Compliance Scheme³¹.

Biodegradable waste

As in previous years, some 95% of animal by-product food waste from The Co-operative Food (1,712 tonnes) was recovered/recycled in 2010. This can be used in pet food, and as food for fishing bait³².

Inhaler recycling

In February 2011, The Co-operative Pharmacy announced that 40 of its branches in South Wales and the South East would take part in the first ever inhaler recycling scheme in Europe.

CFS

📍 In 2010, CFS (excluding Britannia) reused/recycled 940 tonnes (2009: 897 tonnes) of its waste (excluding general waste to landfill from the bank branches), resulting in a stable reuse/recycling rate above 70%³³. The CFS reuse/recycle rate including waste sent to landfill from branches is 58%. The target will be extended to Britannia in 2011.

Other recycled waste

An additional 4,241 tonnes of miscellaneous items were recycled in 2010. Further detail, by business, can be found online 📺.

Customer recycling facilities

In 2011, the Salvation Army carried out a survey of customer recycling facilities at The Co-operative sites, identifying that there are recycling facilities at the majority of The Co-operative Food stores including:

Customer recycling facilities

Facility	Number of stores
Batteries	2,886 ³⁴
Textiles	565
Glass	397
Paper	303
Aluminium	264
Shoes	234
Plastic	146
Books	59
Cartons	27

A proportion of the textile recycling facilities are provided by Textile Recycling for Aid and International Development (TRAID). Customers have recycled 241 tonnes of unwanted clothing through these facilities since 2005.

Waste disposal

Waste sent to landfill

👁️ In 2010, The Co-operative disposed of 47,433 tonnes of waste to landfill, some 39% of total waste arising. A target has been set to divert the vast majority of such waste away from landfill by 2013.

Waste sent to landfill

Business	Tonnes
The Co-operative Food	39,996 ³⁵
The Co-operative Pharmacy	2,374 ³⁶
The Co-operative Funeralcare	1,491 ³⁷
CFS	1,256
The Co-operative Farms	1,142
Manchester head office complex	246
The Co-operative Travel	122 ³⁸
Other businesses ³⁹	425
Total	47,052

In addition to waste disposed directly to landfill, 381 tonnes of clinical and hazardous waste were autoclaved, rendered, or incinerated⁴⁰.

Degradable packaging

For a number of years, The Co-operative Food worked to render packaging more degradable through the use of additives. The Co-operative Food introduced Britain's first degradable plastic carrier bag in 2002, and own-brand sliced bread bags and self-select fresh produce bags were made degradable in 2004 and 2006 respectively. However, subsequent research⁴¹ has found that the use of these additives has no environmental benefit, and, as a result, from January 2010 The Co-operative has ceased to use them in carrier bags and will remove them from other grocery packaging.

Ethical finance

The Co-operative Asset Management (TCAM) overseas shareholder resolutions

In 2010, TCAM was presented with two overseas shareholder resolutions relating to waste or packaging. The first called on Tyson Foods Inc to report on the prevention of run-off and other forms of water pollution, and was supported. The second called on Starbucks Corp to adopt a recycling strategy for beverage containers, and an abstention was registered; TCAM considered that the company already implements an ambitious recycling strategy.

Accompanying notes

- DEFRA Survey of Commercial and Industrial Waste Arisings 2010.
- WRAP (2009) Household Food and Drink Waste in the UK.
- www.wrap.org.uk/retail-supply-chain/voluntary-agreements/courtauld-commitment/phase2-1/index.html
- www.defra.gov.uk/statistics/environment/waste/wrfg16-recycrates
- www.co-operative.coop/Corporate/PDFs/Packaging_Policy.pdf
- In line with WRAP's Courtauld II target and methodology.
- Ibid.
- The majority of waste disposed is sent to landfill (page 77).
- CFS waste arisings 2010: 2,456 tonnes (2009: 2,378 tonnes). CFS waste reused/recycled 2010: 1,507 tonnes (2009: 1,601 tonnes). Full CFS data 2006–2010 can be found online [↗](#).
- 80% complete, with reliance on extrapolation at The Co-operative Pharmacy, The Co-operative Funeralcare and The Co-operative Travel.
- Ibid.
- 85% complete, with reliance on extrapolation at The Co-operative Pharmacy and The Co-operative Travel.
- 85% complete, with reliance on extrapolation at The Co-operative Pharmacy and The Co-operative Travel. Reduction in waste arisings is largely due to store disposals.
- Reduction in waste recycled is largely due to store disposals. Figures specific to CFS can be found online [↗](#).
- Including waste to landfill and waste autoclaved/incinerated.
- Primary packaging refers to packaging that the consumer will take home, and does not include packaging used in transport and/or merchandising.
- In 2010, The Co-operative Food accounted for 98% of total packaging handled by The Co-operative.
- Data includes tonnages from co-operative societies that merged with United Co-operatives prior to its merger with The Co-operative. These include Yorkshire Co-operative Society, Leeds Co-operative Society and Sheffield Co-operative Society. Specific data relating to CFS can be found online [↗](#).
- Includes former Somerfield estate tonnages. 'Other' refers to wood and other packaging materials, such as cork, which account for very small tonnages.
- Based on 115,927 tonnes of primary packaging handled by The Co-operative Food in the baseline year 2006, of which it is estimated that 38,000 is own-brand packaging. Excludes former Somerfield.
- The Co-operative was also a signatory to the original Courtauld Commitment (2005–2010), which sought to 'design-out' packaging waste growth, deliver absolute reductions in packaging weight and tackle the amount of food that consumers throw away. Courtauld II runs from 2010–2012.
- Includes former Somerfield stores.
- Derived assuming The Co-operative accounts for 84.6% of the Co-operative Retail Trading Group collections in 2010.
- 2010 figure includes various recyclates from CFS' main offices (54,1537 tonnes) and the Manchester head office complex centre (44,3249 tonnes).
- Ultimately derived from the European Parliament and Council Directive 94/62/EC on Packaging and Packaging Waste.
- As is any retailer that handles more than 50 tonnes of packaging and has a turnover in excess of £2m per annum. The Co-operative and former Somerfield are obligated as 'sellers' at 48%, pack/fillers at 37% and importers at 100%. The 2010 targets for materials were: glass (810%), paper (698.5%), aluminium (4,038%), steel (698.5%), plastics (297%) and wood (221%). Overall recovery (which includes energy recovery and composting) is set at 743%, of which a minimum of 92% must be achieved via recycling. The Producer Responsibility Obligations (Packaging Waste) Regulations 2007, Defra.
- Under the Regulations, obligations are calculated on the packaging handled in the previous year. The obligation in 2010 was, therefore, based on 211,951 tonnes of packaging handled by The Co-operative and 131,708 tonnes of packaging handled by the former Somerfield estate in 2009.
- www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2006/ukSI_20063315_en.pdf
- The Co-operative producer obligation based on 8,459 items, and distributor obligation based on 215,656 items of electrical and electronic equipment produced/sold in 2010.
- It also includes 30 tonnes of IT equipment from CFS; and 24 tonnes of IT equipment from the Manchester head office complex.
- Places an obligation on retailers to take back batteries in stores that sell more than 32kg of batteries per annum. Although this only applies to approximately 150 of The Co-operative Food stores, all stores have take back facilities.
- As defined in The Animal By-Products Regulations 2005.
- Excludes Britannia estate.
- Although The Co-operative takes back batteries in all stores, there is only a legal obligation to take back batteries in stores that sell more than 32kg per annum. In 2010, only 150 stores were legally obligated to take back batteries.
- Including 37,689 tonnes of waste from Food stores and 2,307 tonnes of waste from Regional Distribution Centres, (extrapolated from a 33% sample). It is estimated that 25,600 tonnes (68%) of The Co-operative Food's waste to landfill is food waste.
- Extrapolated from a 91% sample.
- Extrapolated from a 54% sample.
- Extrapolated from one month's data.
- Waste to landfill data for The Co-operative Electricals, Motor Group, Clothing and Legal Services, and Sunwin Cash in Transit, can be found online [↗](#).
- In addition to waste disposed directly to landfill, The Co-operative Funeralcare sent 283 tonnes of clinical waste and one tonne of spray booth filters to be autoclaved/incinerated; The Co-operative Food sent 90 tonnes of animal by-products respectively to be rendered/incinerated; The Co-operative Motor Group sent six tonnes of hazardous waste, including cleaning solution and rags to be reprocessed and disposed; and The Co-operative Farms disposed of one tonne of asbestos. No data is available for clinical/pharmaceutical waste from The Co-operative Pharmacy.
- Defra (2010) Assessing the Environmental Impacts of Oxo-degradable Plastics Across Their Life Cycle randd.defra.gov.uk/Default.aspx?Menu=Menu&Module=More&Location=None&Completed=0&ProjectID=16263#Description

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