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Copefrut develops Material Recyclability Index



New tool quantifies the recyclability of packaging to enable more strategic decision-making

Chile's Copefrut has developed a new tool to help it improve its understanding of how different types of packaging can be integrated into recycling flows.

"The Material Recyclability Index quantifies the recyclability of packaging, considering not only what type of materials are being used, but also how they affect the products (inks, glues, waxes) that are applied to it and what is the effective probability of recycling in the different countries to which the materials are being sent," said Daniela Quiroga, project engineer of Dictuc's GreenLab Research Centre at the Catholic University of Chile, which helped develop the tool.

The latter point, she explained, is of vital importance since "it is of no use for a material to be optimal for recycling if

there is no technology or the necessary incentive for it to be recycled".

Sustainable packaging is beginning to replace traditional packaging, a trend that has gone hand in hand with what customers want and that has also gained momentum thanks to the commitment of companies across all sectors, which currently ensure both that standards are upheld and that their organizations provide a real contribution.

According to the World Health Organization, for packaging to be considered sustainable, it must use "the lowest amount of materials and only essential packaging; less volume and weight; less use of plastic; sustainable life cycle from manufacturing to transport, through subsequent recycling, energy and water used;

reusability; low impact on workers' health; and materials that do not include chemicals dangerous to human or animal health".

Plastic is one of the largest remnants of the fruit and vegetable industry. It appears in various processes within the production chain and although there are increasing technologies aimed at making it eco-friendly, there is still a lot of work to be done in this area.

Copefrut has been one of the pioneers of the move towards more sustainable packaging in the fruit industry. "We understand that sustainability is no longer an option, but rather an issue that we must develop for the good of our customers, our employees and the planet," explained María José Castillo, the company's supply manager.

In addition to incorporating oxo-

to be evaluated using the new

increasing the probability that they will be

<http://www.fruitnet.com/americafruit/article/1474/parts-of-san-diego-quarantined-as-psyllid-count-mounts>

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biodegradable bags, macro-plastic bins, Chep pallets, and 100 per cent recyclable boxes and corner pieces into its operation, this year Copefruit packed two containers using 100 per cent compostable bags made from sugar cane for the first time.

The bags were manufactured by Germany's Bio4pack, which worked with a multidisciplinary team from Copefruit to develop the technology to pack organic apples.

"Plastics with these characteristics can be converted into organic fertiliser, also known as compost, and its main characteristic is that at least 90 per cent of the material degrades in a maximum period of six months, thus managing the end of the product's life with a circular approach," Castillo explained.

The project was the first

Recyclability Index, elaborated with the advice of Dictuc. It found that the substitution materials increased the recyclability of each individual sale by 1.4 per cent, a value that can have a significant impact on the total recyclability of the company as the proportion of sales in this format increases.

"Copefruit is taking charge of making a complete analysis, both of the recyclability – which by their nature the materials that are being used already have – and of the existence of the necessary channels for their recycling at the destination," said Daniel Quiroga of Dictuc's GreenLab.

"The use and analysis of this indicator will make it easier for the company to identify where it has to put efforts to improve the recyclability of its packaging, significantly

recycled, and efficiently and effectively approaching its sustainability objectives."

The Index, which is dynamic in its application, will make it possible to "evaluate and analyse the percentage of recyclability of each of our materials and therefore make strategic decisions that push retail, the market and the industry, in terms of their efforts together with their suppliers and clients," Castillo said.

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