# CODE OF PRACTICE

## for Packaging Design, Education and Procurement

### Labelling & Symbols

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| 1. PACKAGING FUNCTIONALITY: | |
|---|---|
| The primary purpose of packaging is to ensure product integrity. Packaging should be designed to meet market and consumer needs while minimising net environmental impact in a cost effective way. | Meet technical performance requirements<br>Meet consumer needs and expectations<br>Labelling and symbols to help re-use, recovery and recycling |

### Labelling and Symbols to Help Re-use, Recovery and Recycling

**Labelling:** Consumer information relating to the product, packaging material identification, and/or appropriate disposal methods is usually written on product 'labels', or by the use of decoration, or widely accepted graphics directly on-pack.

Successful resource re-use, recovery and recycling can be enhanced by providing relevant on-pack information and/or appropriate graphics detailing the most appropriate method for disposing of the packaging. By providing the consumer with clear information they can make informed choices on the packaging material they are purchasing. Recovery of materials can be improved through greater understanding by the consumer of the systems which are available.

Where labels are used, consideration should always include compatibility between the packaging material, label material, inks and adhesives in the recycling process to avoid compromising the ability to successfully recycle the primary packaging material.

All information, claims and symbols on-label/pack must be accurate without readers having to refer to fine print or a website. Businesses cannot rely on a reference to a website to correct misleading information on-label/pack. The information must be complete, legible and accurate by itself. However a website could be used to provide additional detailed information on the materials used and/or disposal options.

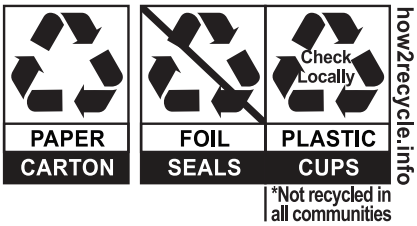
Any limitations should also be made clear. For example, if plastic packaging cannot be recycled because of residues from contents, this should be stated on the label. Not only is this a Fair Trading Act issue, but there may be occupational safety and health issues for workers in recycling plants.

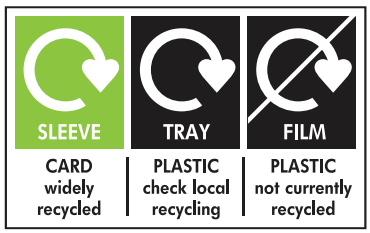
Care should be exercised to ensure that all re-use, recovery and recycling claims or symbols are valid in the context of the country where the products are sold. There could be legal implications if claims are only 'technically' correct not 'practically' possible (for example, no recycling plant in the market country versus the country of origin), which could be viewed as an intention to mislead the consumer under the New Zealand Fair Trading Act, or equivalent international legislation. See Packaging, Environmental Claims and the Law section.

In addition to the information which must legally be displayed on-label/pack attempts are being made in various countries to introduce standard symbols to clearly illustrate to the consumer the recycling options for the packaging. This could have a significant impact on exporters who may be required to use the new labelling by their customers.

Below are two examples of voluntary labelling systems which aim to give consumers much clearer on-pack guidance to improve their understanding of what packaging can and cannot be recycled.

The 'how2recycle' label has been endorsed in the USA by several state and local governments focused on addressing their local recycling challenges. The goal of the 'how2recycle' label is to reduce consumer confusion in the USA with a clear and consistent recycling label and corresponding informational website. The introductory launch will continue through early 2013.




In the United Kingdom the British Retail Consortium has launched an on-pack recycling scheme which aims to deliver a simpler, UK-wide, consistent, recycling message on both retailer private label and brand-owner packaging to help consumers recycle more material, more often. These labels clearly and simply detail the options for the various components which make up a package.

**Symbols:** The New Zealand government has produced a directory to improve the availability of information about ecolabels and other sustainability indicators. It provides summary information about each label, and users are encouraged to access further detail from ecolabel owner websites using the links provided. The directory of ecolabels is available on request in spreadsheet format. Go to:
**http://www.business.govt.nz/compliance/environment/understanding-ecolabels-and-sustainability-claims/**
*Please note that whilst this information remains valid this particular directory is not being maintained at the time of this update (October 2012). If you are relying on information contained it would be prudent to check that you are using the most up to date information.*

**Plastic Resin Codes:** Due to the wide range of plastic resin types used in packaging, all businesses in the packaging industry are encouraged to use the plastics identification code.

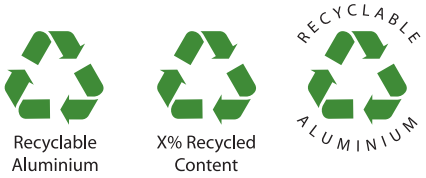
This international coding system was developed to provide manufacturers and recyclers' with a uniform identification system. Using this resin identification code enables recyclers to sort plastic into each resin type thereby producing a quality recyclate commodity. The Plastics Identification Code does not equal recyclability as is commonly assumed. It assists consumers to correctly identify which plastics are acceptable in municipal recycling collections and which are not.
For more information go to: **www.plastics.org.nz**

**Steel:** New Zealand's steel can manufacturers recommend using the recyclable steel symbol on all steel cans, including steel aerosol cans.



**Compostable:** The seedling logo is used to identify certified compostable packaging. The Australian Bioplastics Association (ABA) has licensed use of the logo from the European Bioplastics Association for use in Australia and New Zealand. Successful applicants to ABA will be licensed to use the logo along with their unique certification number. Use of the seedling logo is available to both packaging material producers and their customers. For more information go to: **www.bioplastics.org.au**

**Mobius Loop:** The Mobius Loop indicates that a product has recycled content and/or is able to be recycled. It's use is governed by ISO 14021 which recommends that the symbol should be qualified to clarify the intended meaning. For example:




**® Green Dot:** The green dot is not a recycling symbol and should not be used as a recycling symbol. It is a trademark displayed on packaging in many European countries to signify that the manufacturer has joined a compliance organisation established under the European Packaging & Packaging Waste Directive and has paid a licence fee to use the green dot.

**Signage:** The above symbols, which are designed to be used on-label/pack, should not be confused with symbols designed to be used on signage. Unlike the label symbols many of which are designed and used to provide global consistency, for example the international resin coding system for identifying plastics, recycling signage and/or symbols can be localised to a particular organisation, area or country. Care should be taken as significant variations are in use.

For more information on a set of standardised symbols developed in New Zealand by the Recycling Operators of NZ (RONZ) for use on signage go to: **www.wasteminz.org.nz**

Alternatively an internet search will provide a wide variety of recycling signage and symbols which can be adopted or adapted for your own particular usage.

**Barcodes/QR Codes and RFID Tags:** Barcodes (including the relatively new 2-dimensional variety such as DataMatrix and QR codes), Radio Frequency Identification tags (RFID) are 'data carriers' that facilitate automatic product identification or encoding of information in a computer-readable format.
With increasing consumer drive for more detailed information about both the product and its packaging these coding systems can meet these demands within the limited space constraints on labels.

The familiar GS1-standard retail bar code has also been in use for almost 40 years. These barcodes encode a globally-unique identifier recognised by the cash register (or increasingly a consumer's mobile phone) to reference an ever expanding range of information about the product, both for business-to-business applications (pricing, inventory, supply chain), and emerging business-to-consumer applications (comparison shopping, ingredients, allergens information). Other GS1 barcodes used on traded units (e.g. shippers, pallets) enable greater accuracy and speed in getting packages delivered and stock management. The use of two dimensional barcodes (such as DataMatrix or QR codes) has grown rapidly in recent years in line with the introduction of smartphones. GS1 DataMatrix barcodes are primarily seen where a lot of additional product information (e.g. serial number, batch) is required to be scanned at the same time as the product identifier, such as clinical healthcare. QR Codes are typically used in marketing applications where an iPhone, Android or other camera-enabled Smartphone scans the QR code to link to a website address.

RFID Tags have been in use for several years and encode into a tiny silicon chip a product identifier. The chip has attached to it a small antenna which allows the chip to 'talk' to an antenna/reader over the radio frequency spectrum at a distance of up to 5 meters. Developed as a supply chain tracking system they have enabled significant improvement in tracking goods across global supply chains and have started to appear on individual consumer products where real-time inventory information or enhanced identification is desirable (e.g. consumer electronics, apparel). Many industry commentators believe that RFID tags will eventually take over from barcodes as the primary means of identification for products throughout the supply chain.

For further information on bar codes and RFID tags visit: **www.gs1nz.org**

*See related notes in section 1.1*

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