

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

Labelling: Successful resource re-use, recovery and recycling can be greatly enhanced by providing relevant on-pack information to help consumers decide on the most appropriate method for disposing of the packaging.

Consumer information relating to material identification, and/or appropriate disposal methods, is usually written on product “labels”, or by the use of decoration, or widely accepted symbols directly on-pack.

Displaying information on-pack can have a significant environmental advantage if it avoids the introduction of a label which not only adds an additional layer of material but potentially contaminates the package by introducing another material type.

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.

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.

Go to http://www.med.govt.nz/templates/ContentTopicSummary___37890.aspx

Some of the more commonly used symbols are set out below.

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.



PET



HDPE



PVC



LDPE



PP



PS



OTHER

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 the same resin type thereby producing a high quality recycle commodity. It also helps consumers to correctly identify which plastics to send to recycling and which to send to landfill. 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 aerosols.



Compostable: The seedling logo is used to identify certified compostable packaging materials. The Australasian 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:



Recyclable
Aluminium



X% recycled
content



Green Dot: The green dot is not a recycling symbol and should not be used as a recycling symbol. It is actually a trademark displayed on packaging in many European countries and signifies 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. The Recyclers of New Zealand (RONZ) have developed a suite of symbols for use on signage, for example signage on public recycling bins, resource recovery stations, workplace signage (i.e. office recycling systems), household recycling bins, etc. For more information go to www.ronz.org.nz