

62% say packaging is their biggest environmental concern

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Research findings show 62% of professionals say that packaging is their biggest environmental concern against food waste.

The online poll, conducted by trade show specialists easyFairs, received 183 respondents and highlights the main 'green' concern at the moment is around packaging. According to recent statistics, the UK throws away about £12billion of edible food each year and critics say confusing packaging is partly to blame.



Sunrita Dutta, Owner of Eco Elegance, a supplier of trendy eco friendly promotional and fashion bags, voted packaging as her biggest environmental concern, comments: "I think the debate is not on what is our personal concern but more to do with practical logistical and marketing issues when it comes to packaging be it food, toys, cosmetics etc. Supermarkets are flooded with plastic packed vegetables and fruit, such as potatoes, onions, bananas, apples and many others, which can have an optimal shelf life if stored in hessian mesh bags or loose. I call this unnecessary packaging."

The online poll results released by easyFairs follow the recent announcements from the Government urging manufacturers to remove sell-by-dates from food packaging to help cut waste and save shoppers money.

Peter Martin, an Entrepreneur from Hereford, who has just patented a new packaging enviro-design that revolutionises the caps on bottles and jars, turning them from being thrown-away into something consumers would want to keep, says: "On an environment basis, in terms of reducing waste, I have to go with food as my biggest concern. That said, I have my doubts on getting consumers much more conscious of over-buying and then reacting to expiry dates, or over cooking and avoiding left overs. As many point out, packaging in our modern society is mostly mitigating vast food waste."

"I agree," says Alison Church, Head of Marketing at easyFairs UK, and who helped

conduct the web poll. "Perhaps the biggest issue is consumer education - to be able to make an informed decision when purchasing products, and to make the consumer aware of the impact (both environmental and social) of over-buying and food waste. I'm sure many see throwing food away as the lesser evil as much of it is biodegradable or compostable; it's easy not to acknowledge or recognise the energy and resources used to get the food into the home. Maybe the interesting question here is...what should be done to educate the consumer?"

A statement echoed only a few days ago by The British Retail Consortium, who say that helping consumers understand that food past its best-before date can still be eaten or cooked, which would then contribute to reducing food waste and also save people money. According to The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), five million tonnes of edible food is discarded by UK households annually – the equivalent of £680 for a household with children.

Keith Winn, Chief Visionary Officer at Greater Good Alliance, and a recognised author and speaker on sustainability, also voted food waste as his biggest environmental concern in the easyFairs web poll. Keith provides one solution to the problem: "Millions of people (that includes children) in this country alone go hungry every day. Statistics show that if just 20% of the discarded food as waste is redirected, the hunger problem would be solved. So by creating and/or expanding existing social, private, and education programs focused on this issue, we not only overcome serious basic health issues (and eventually huge financial repercussions) but also provide a large part of the solution to the environmental issue."

Following the web poll findings, easyFairs will be hosting a packaging debate at their PACKAGING INNOVATIONS London 2011 show on Thursday 6 October, at the Business Design Centre, Islington from 3.15pm to 4.30pm.

Alison Church explains: "The Question Time styled debate will focus on the functionality of a products packaging and if it's created with the post sale demands of a consumer. I'm sure the subject of sell-by-dates, and the packaging vs food waste issue will be high on the agenda. So looks set to be a fascinating debate."