



# Packaging Matters<sup>TM</sup>

for Product Safety and  
Consumer Confidence

# A gathering storm

Globally, consumers are increasingly concerned about product safety. From child resistance to food safety to chemicals of concern and migration of materials, consumers are demanding transparency. It's clear they expect it not from government but from brands.

And they keep expanding the boundaries of what is acceptable. Consumers are exerting pressure on companies to make changes, even if those changes are outside of what is scientifically proven or required by current laws and regulation.

Food, beverage and consumer product companies face not only headline and reputation risks, but also emerging legal and regulatory issues and costly changes to their products and manufacturing processes. Major brands have removed FDA-approved ingredients from flagship products, choosing to respond to consumers rather than fight the tide of negative sentiment.

And more could be coming: major retailers are adding to the pressure, making significant demands of suppliers on safety issues, outpacing laws and regulation on the subject.

What's more, the challenge is exacerbated by the emotional nature of food and product safety, the faster pace and extended reach of the public conversation and the tenacity of the activists behind many of the consumer campaigns.

Trust is not entirely lost, but it is clear that compliance is no longer enough. This gathering storm demands a responsible strategy for mitigating risk and a collaborative approach to ensuring product safety and consumer confidence in brands.



 more than  
**85%**  
of global consumers  
say safe packaging  
makes them more  
likely to trust and  
purchase products  
from a brand\*

\* Source: 2015 Packaging Matters™ Study

# Packaging matters

So what does this gathering storm mean for packaging?

Historically, packaging has played a simple, yet crucial role in the supply chain: protection of the product through transport. And as brands have evolved, packaging has become an essential element of the marketing mix, as well. Great packaging communicates a brand's essence to the consumer at the point of sale and delivers the brand promise throughout the usage experience—at home and on-the-go.

At its core, packaging is essentially a contract between brands and consumers, promising with its sturdy materials and informative graphics that consumers can trust that the product inside is safe. Safe to eat, or rub on your skin, or use to wash your child's hair.

Keeping products safe as they move from point A to point B is harder than ever. As retail channels evolve and the global supply chain grows more complex, points A and B are physically and figuratively farther and farther apart, placing significant pressure on preserving product integrity and strain on the relationship between brands and consumers.

Major shifts are taking place in how brands and consumers communicate, what they expect from each other, where they interact.

The result: consumers expect, but no longer assume, products that are marketed to them are safe. Trust is at risk. Packaging—the de facto symbol of that trust and the physical embodiment of product integrity—plays a crucial role.

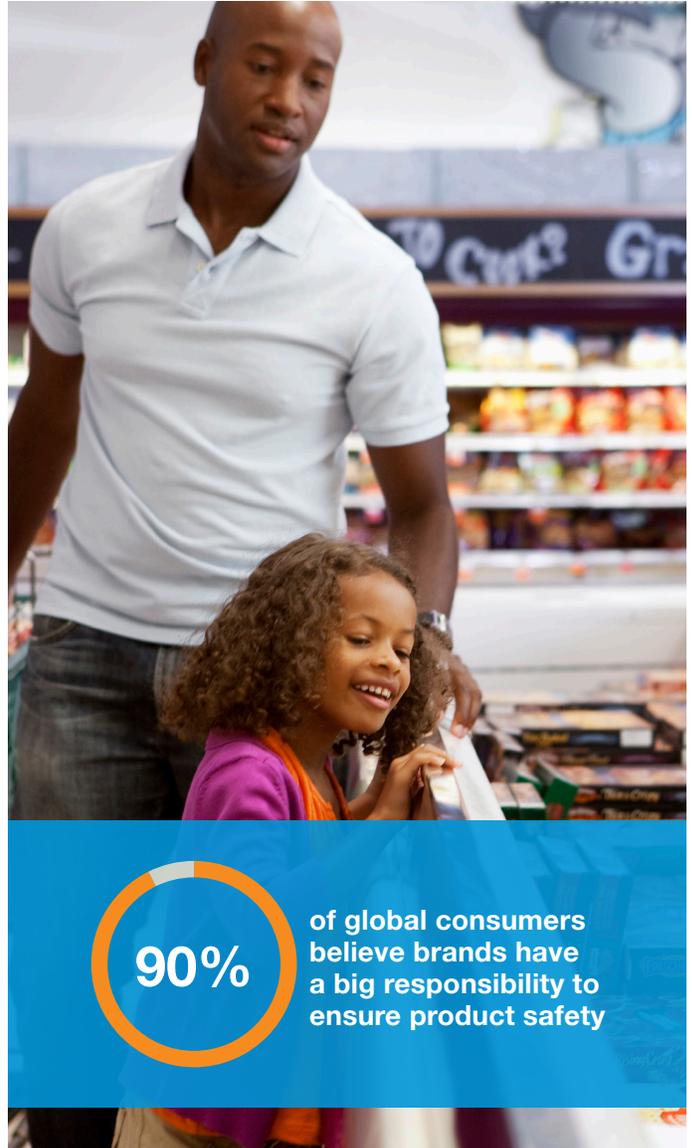


**Packaging is a contract between brands and consumers**, promising with its sturdy materials and informative graphics that consumers can trust that the product inside is safe.

# Data show strong link between packaging and consumer confidence in brands

WestRock's Packaging Matters™ study tracks the impact of packaging on product satisfaction and consumer purchasing behavior around the world. This year's study examined the attitudes of 5,075 consumers in five markets (Brazil, China, Germany, France and the United States) across 11 FMCG product categories (food, beverage, medicine, personal care, etc.). The first two years of data gathered through the Packaging Matters study have demonstrated a strong link between packaging and product satisfaction. By asking consumers in our 2015 study specific questions about packaging and product safety, we uncovered an opportunity for brands to increase not only product satisfaction, but also trust.

Packaging Matters data show packaging is part of a rapidly expanding consumer definition for product safety and who is ultimately responsible for ensuring it. Consumers told us that safe packaging is inherently linked to trust, favorability and purchasing behavior. The data is strongest in emerging markets. In these countries, where trust in the supply chain is at a deficit, there is a huge opportunity for brands to reassure consumers through packaging. The study further confirmed consumers around the world expect brands—more than government—to deliver on product safety, and they see packaging as an important part of the solution.



**90%** of global consumers believe brands have a big responsibility to ensure product safety

# Packaging matters for product safety and global consumer confidence

## Packaging as a safety measure



## On our best behavior

More than 80% of global consumers say safe packaging makes them

- **more favorable** toward a manufacturer or brand (88%)
- **trust** the manufacturer or brand more (87%)
- more likely to **purchase products** from the manufacturer or brand (86%)
- more likely to **recommend products** from the manufacturer or brand to friends and family (83%)

## Product satisfaction



## Impact on purchase



Safe packaging is linked to **trust, favorability and purchasing behavior.**

## What matters most

Packaging attributes that relate to ensuring the safety of a product are the most important to consumers.

- Prevents spilling, leaking or breaking (76%)
- Keeps the product safe (74%)
- Keeps the product fresh/effective (74%)
- Easy to reclose or reseal (69%)
- Easy to open (68%)

## Compliance is no longer enough



Note: For the purpose of the Packaging Matters™ Study, "safe packaging" was defined as "packaging that is designed to keep the product safe and/or protect me and my family."

# Safety across categories

Packaging safety is important to consumer satisfaction across a range of categories. They're listed below in order of importance.



## Medicine

### MEDICINE

#### Rx for safety

Consumers say that it is “very or extremely” important that medicine packaging “keep the product safe” (80%) and 71% want packaging to be “designed to keep me and/or my family safe” — more than any other category. Both attributes have large satisfaction gaps—21 points and 17 points, respectively.



## Food

### FOOD

#### Hungry for more

One third of global consumers strongly agree that packaging designed to keep the product safe makes them feel more favorable towards the brand and more likely to purchase that brand.



## Household cleaners

### HOUSEHOLD CLEANERS

#### Keep it clean

Household cleaners are not far behind medicine when it comes to the value consumers place on child-resistant packaging features. Seventy percent of consumers say it is “very or extremely” important that household cleaner packaging is “designed to keep me and/or my family safe.” Household packaging also has a larger satisfaction gap than any other category on this attribute (19 points).



## Beauty, personal care and fragrance

### BEAUTY, PERSONAL CARE AND FRAGRANCE

#### Sitting pretty

Consumers give the most credit to beauty and personal care brands for “making a sufficient effort to improve product safety through packaging.” (79%)



## Beverages (alcoholic and non-alcoholic)

### BEVERAGES

#### Put a lid on it

Seventy percent of consumers say that it is “very or “extremely” important that beverage packaging “keeps the product safe.” About two-thirds (64%) say that it is “very” or “extremely important” that beverage packaging be “designed to keep me and/or my family safe.”

**Note:** The satisfaction gap is the number of consumers who say they are “completely or very satisfied” with a packaging attribute in the category minus the number who say an attribute is “very or extremely important” to them in that category.

# A dynamic conversation

Product safety has moved to the center of public debate. We're hearing about it in the news every day. It's being discussed in laboratories, boardrooms, statehouses, coffee shops and at kitchen tables across the world. To better understand the crucial role of packaging in this emerging issue, we're listening to the voices of NGOs, major retailers, food scientists, legislators, academics, activists, major brands and everyday consumers. Here is a snapshot of the conversation.

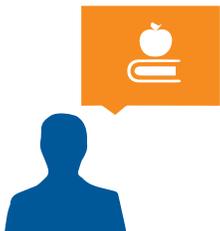
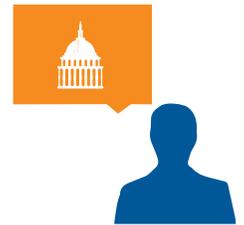


“When it comes to packaging, the key word for moms is ‘protect.’ Moms trust packaging to do two things: keep products safe FOR their families and keep their families safe FROM products not intended for their use. If that contract is broken, brands will have a major issue on their hands. As moms pay closer attention to food safety and child resistance, brands can use packaging not only to ensure safety but also consumer confidence.”

Katherine Wintsch, Founder and CEO, The Mom Complex

“The consumer value equation for food, beverages and consumer products has fundamentally shifted. Consumer expectations have evolved from ‘do no harm’ to ‘keep me well.’ The ‘new normal’ provides an opportunity for FMCGs to rethink their approach to food and product safety to create value.”

Elisabeth Hagen, former Under Secretary for Food Safety, United States Department of Agriculture



“Packaging is an integral part of the technology that ensures product safety.”

Juming Tang, Ph.D., associate chair, Biological Systems Engineering, Washington State University

“We understand that it is critical to continue our work with the vendor and retail community to address product ingredients, and we recently initiated organizational changes that identify this as a key component of our company's broader corporate social responsibility program. We are in the process of developing a Chemical Sustainability Program, which we anticipate announcing in the coming months.”

Walgreen's, in an overview of the company's Economical Sustainability Program



“Packaging should ensure product safety and stability. This is especially important for food and drug safety.”

Female consumer, 62, Packaging Matters™ Study 2015

“The other day I Googled brominated vegetable oil...”

Sarah Kavanagh, a consumer in Hattiesburg, Miss., in a change.org petition that prompted a leading beverage company to remove an original, FDA-approved ingredient from a flagship sports drink





“Every day, I make choices about the products I buy and bring into my home. I have become increasingly concerned about the links between toxic chemicals and rising adverse health trends in our country. Unfortunately, it is difficult for me to know if items in your store contain chemicals that may put my health, my family, and our environment at risk.”

[Excerpt from a letter consumers can send to the CEOs of major retailers from the Mind the Store campaign website](#)

“Nestlé USA announced today its commitment to removing artificial flavors and FDA-certified colors, like Red 40 and Yellow 5, from all of its chocolate candy products. By the end of 2015, more than 250 products and 10 brands including NESTLÉ® BUTTERFINGER®, CRUNCH® and BABY RUTH® will be free of artificial flavors and certified colors. Products will begin appearing on store shelves by mid-2015, and will be identified by a “No Artificial Flavors or Colors” claim featured on-pack.”



["Nestlé USA Commits to Removing Artificial Flavors and FDA-certified Colors from all Nestle \(accent\) Chocolate Candy by the End of 2015," Company Press Release, Feb. 17, 2015](#)



“The Detergent Poisoning and Child Safety Act would require the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) to set mandatory safety standards for easily accessible liquid detergent packets...Specifically, the bill would give the CPSC the authority and direction to issue rules requiring safer, child-resistant packaging for liquid detergent packets within eighteen months, compelling industry to implement stronger and more effective policies...”

[Press Release from the office of U.S. Sen. Bill Nelson \(D-FL\), introducing federal detergent packet child safety legislation, February 2015](#)

“Using packaging as a first step in product safety is movement in a good direction.”

[Female consumer, 26, Packaging Matters Study 2015](#)



“At P&G, safety is our number one priority. Most of us are parents too, and we want families to use our products safely.”

[Shailesh Jejurikar, P&G's North America Fabric Care and New Business Development President, in a press release announcing the company's "Up, Up and Away" laundry pac safety initiative, April 2015](#)

# A framework for dialogue on packaging safety

Based on our consumer data, our ongoing dialogue with key stakeholders and our continued monitoring of the online conversation surrounding this issue, we offer up this framework for dialogue on packaging safety. It's our hope that these key questions will be just the beginning of a conversation across our industry about how we can best support our customers by ensuring product safety and assuring consumer confidence through packaging.

## How can safe packaging protect consumers?

By preserving product integrity, safe packaging can support brands' efforts to ensure products don't harm consumers. How can safe packaging physically protect consumers from interactions with products that are not intended for their use? Today, we can use child-resistant features and tamper-evident seals. How can we improve these mechanisms to enhance safety while improving consumer experience? What other innovations should we consider? And how can packaging itself be effective without containing materials that undermine consumer confidence?



### Insights from our experts



**Prevention is the answer**  
Hung Le, Vice President,  
Innovation Engagement

Child-resistant (CR) medication packaging is one of the best-documented successes in preventing the unintentional poisoning of children. Since the United States Poison Prevention Act was passed in 1970, the use of CR packaging has prevented thousands of poisonings and saved many children's lives. Regulations for CR packaging differ around the world. But the responsibility to consider CR packaging for medication goes beyond simply meeting regulations. If medication toxicity warrants the use of CR packaging in one region, then it's a best practice to consider using CR packaging globally.



**Product stewards**  
Rhea Hale, Global Product  
Stewardship

Packaging is under increasing scrutiny to ensure that the consumable product that it protects is not contaminated by hazardous or toxic substances originating from the package. Consumers and brand owners are interested in the risks posed by packaging itself. The controversy surrounding possible endocrine disruptors leaching into food from plastic bottles and can linings is just one example of how heightened awareness can result in significant changes in packaging formulations. Our commitment to product stewardship protects the value of the WestRock brand and the brands of our customers. We work with our suppliers and customers to identify substances of concern and minimize safety risks and the environmental footprint of our products. As stewards – we take responsibility to ensure product safety, bringing value to our customers and making a difference in people's lives.

## How can safe packaging protect products?

Whether by preserving product integrity, keeping a product fresh and effective, preventing a product from spilling or leaking, protecting a product from being crushed, or extending shelf life, safe packaging can protect products from physical damage and contaminants. What other innovations should we consider for product protection? What kind of barrier technology should we be exploring to safely extend shelf life?



## How can safe packaging protect brands?

Safe packaging both ensures product safety and reassures consumers that brands care about their safety. Global consumers say safe packaging makes them more likely to trust a brand, purchase products from that brand and recommend those products to friends and family. How else could package designers use structure, graphics and seals to reinforce consumer confidence?



## Insights from our experts



**Sheets of strength**  
Teresa Krug, Paperboard Innovation

Think of a strong material. What comes to mind? Steel, concrete, diamond, right? We can't exactly wrap crackers and soda in these materials. What about paper? When it's properly engineered, paperboard is actually very strong. From the smallest individual fibers, all the way to a 30 ton roll of paperboard, our scientists and engineers build strength into our paperboard every step of the way.



**Good enough to eat**  
Doug Reid, Vice President, Materials

Next to medicine, our data show that packaging safety is most important to consumer satisfaction in the food category. Especially in emerging markets, where consumers have been exposed to contaminated milk, spoiled meat and tainted baby formula, trust in the food supply chain is extremely low. Packaging has the potential to help ensure food safety and reassure consumer confidence in brands. At WestRock, we are committed to the production of safe packaging materials for the food and food service industries. Like our customers, protecting the health of consumers is our first priority. Measures to ensure food safety are integrated into every step of the process—from sourcing raw materials to product development to manufacturing and delivery.



**Special delivery**  
Tracy Doherty, Senior Director, Marketing & Innovation

For brands, packaging is a critical part of both the story and the storytelling. Packaging conveys the brand in both senses of the word—via delivery and communication. Packaging materials and design can help protect the product throughout the supply chain, from filling lines through at-home use. Safe packaging assures consumers brands care about their safety. It reinforces and protects the valuable brand story. It's no wonder global consumers say safe packaging makes them more likely to trust brands.

## How can safe packaging protect the environment?

Packaging designed for end-of-life protects not only products, consumers and brands, but also the environment. How else should we be thinking about environmental impact when designing new packaging products?



### Insights from our experts



**Safety first... and last**  
Chris Davidson, Director of  
Global Sustainability

When it comes to packaging, we think in "cycles." We start with the life cycle of the trees that we use and work closely with landowners to ensure sustainable forestry practices. And we think about the life cycle of a package--from design to development to manufacturing. Through the supply chain, from the shelf to the pantry to the curbside recycling bin... and back again. We want to move away from the linear model of "take, make, waste," to a more circular model where end-of-life is a major design consideration. To us, designing for end-of-life means:

- Developing renewable and recyclable materials, including our 100% renewable position for paperboard packaging and the exploration of biopolymers as a material for plastic packaging
- Creating innovative packaging solutions that reduce or eliminate waste through recycled raw materials, light-weighting, ease of recyclability and composting
- Designing packaging that makes it easier for consumers to participate in sustainable practices, such as recycling and composting

# Packaging matters for product safety and consumer confidence

As consumers continue to demand more transparency across an increasingly complex supply chain, we believe packaging matters now more than ever. Packaging can play a crucial role in ensuring the safety of products and assuring consumer confidence in that safety.

We look forward to continuing this important discussion with brands, retailers and consumers. We offer up our consumer insights data and a framework for dialogue around packaging safety to our customers, our industry partners and other key stakeholders engaged in the conversation. It is our goal not only to weather this gathering storm, but to get out in front of it—protecting consumers and increasing their trust in brands—together.

We invite you to share your feedback at [westrock.com](http://westrock.com) and join the conversation.



