



Information sheet

The Courtauld Commitment

Supporting the UK grocery sector in reducing food, drink and packaging waste and becoming more resource efficient for the benefit of the economy, industry and consumers.

The Courtauld Commitment is a voluntary agreement aimed at improving resource efficiency and reducing the carbon and wider environmental impact of the UK grocery retail sector. It was launched in 2005 at a Ministerial event at the Courtauld Gallery in London.

The Commitment helps deliver the UK governments' policy goal of a 'circular economy' and the objectives of the Climate Change Act to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 34% by 2020 and 80% by 2050. Efficiencies made through Courtauld not only benefit the UK grocery sector, consumers and economy but globally, as many signatories have international supply chains.

How it works

WRAP is responsible for the agreement and works in partnership with leading grocery retailers, brand owners, manufacturers and suppliers who sign up and support the delivery of the targets. It covers products manufactured and sold in the UK market, regardless of country of origin and includes food, drink, household and personal care products.

The British Retail Consortium and the Food and Drink Federation are both aligned with the Commitment's principles.

Three phases

Courtauld 1 (2005-10) looked at new solutions and technologies so that less food and primary packaging ended up as **household** waste. The targets were weight based (reported in tonnes), and [42 signatories](#) participated.

During the course of Courtauld 1, 1.2 million tonnes of food and packaging waste was prevented, with a monetary value of £1.8 billion. To give you an idea of scale –the tonnage saved is equivalent to filling 128,000 refuse lorries that, if lined up, would stretch from Truro to Inverness. Courtauld 1 saved 3.3 million tonnes of CO₂eq, which is equivalent to the emissions from 500,000 round-the-world flights. (See [case studies](#)).

Courtauld 2 (2010-12) not only aimed to reduce primary packaging and household food and drink waste, but also focused on reducing secondary and tertiary packaging, and supply chain waste. It encouraged the sustainable use of resources throughout the whole supply chain.

Phase 2 results WRAP worked with [53 signatories](#) to deliver the targets. The results are as follows:

- Packaging: 10.0% drop in associated greenhouse gas emissions against a 10% target.
- Supply chain: 7.4% cut in waste against a 5% target.
- Household food waste: 3.7% absolute reduction was achieved in 2010 against a 4% target.

A total of 1.7 million tonnes of waste was reduced through the influence of the Commitment, which is a reduction of 4.8 million tonnes of CO₂eq. Enough waste has been saved to fill 184,500 refuse lorries. If lined up, this would stretch from Edinburgh to Geneva. Additional information on the [final results](#) is available. (See [case studies](#)).

Courtauld 3 (2013-15) launched early May 2013 and aims to reduce the weight and carbon impact of household food waste, grocery product and packaging waste, both in the home and the UK grocery sector, by 4% overall by 2015, from a 2012 baseline. This translates into a cumulative reduction of 1.1 million tonnes of waste, 2.9 million tonnes of CO₂eq and a cost benefit of £1.6 billion to industry and consumers. To date, 52 signatories have signed up.



Courtauld 3 targets

Signatories will work with WRAP to deliver on the three targets below.

1. To reduce [household food and drink](#) waste by 5% by 2015. This represents a reduction of 9% relative to anticipated changes in food and drink sales.

Why? Food is a valuable resource and yet UK households throw away over 7 million tonnes every year, around 20% by weight of that purchased. More than 60% (4.4 million tonnes) of this could have been eaten, including around 17 billion '5 a day' portions ([2011 WRAP research](#)).

What can be done? Optimise product, packaging and label design (including advice and messaging) to help consumers make the most of the food they buy. Work to raise awareness of the benefits of reducing food waste, amongst customers and staff. Use [Love Food Hate Waste](#) to enable customers and staff to waste less food.

2. To reduce traditional ingredient, product and packaging waste in the grocery [supply chain](#) by 3% by 2015. This equates to an 8% reduction relative to anticipated production and sales volumes.

Why? Food, drink and packaging waste in the UK supply chain is about 6.5 million tonnes per year and costs £6.9 billion ([2011 WRAP research](#)).

What can be done? Set a waste reduction target and improve collection and use of data to prioritise action and measure benefits. Optimise operational and supply chain systems to support waste prevention and use [LEAN](#) and continuous improvement techniques to reduce waste.

Work to raise awareness of the benefits and methods of preventing waste amongst staff and supply chains. Encourage redistribution of surplus food, which would otherwise become waste.

3. To improve [packaging design](#) through the supply chain to maximise recycled content (as appropriate), improve recyclability and deliver product protection to reduce food waste, while ensuring there is no increase in the carbon impact of packaging by 2015. This equates to a carbon reduction of 3% relative to anticipated sales volumes.

Why? Optimising packaging has been a great success and will continue, but there are limited opportunities to reduce it further without risking increased product wastage. Now the focus is on recycled content, encouraging recycling and helping to reduce food waste.

What can be done? Improve packaging design to increase recyclability and recycled content of packaging, where appropriate. Continue to reduce the carbon impact of packaging where possible while reducing damage in the supply chain and food waste in the home. Work with WRAP and others to encourage consumers to increase packaging recycling levels.

What can the Commitment do?

Courtauld helps businesses, consumers and local authorities to save money, improve performance and reduce waste.

It specifically helps businesses to:

- save costs, cut waste and reduce CO₂e emissions;
- deliver against consumer demand for less waste;
- improve industry practice and drive sector innovation;
- improve resource efficiency of products and their packaging;
- create a support network and vehicle for change;
- enhance corporate environmental performance; and
- improve the competitiveness and resilience of businesses and their suppliers.

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(Note: all figures are approx. See our online [Handy UK Retail Waste Figures](#) for more data).

(November 2013)

