**Background**

In late 2013, WRAP initiated a call for projects to Courtauld Commitment 3 (CC3) signatories to trial new approaches to enable them to meet their packaging targets. The results and learning from this would then be disseminated to the rest of the signatories for their reference and consideration.

Although guidance for the recyclability of packaging exists, Morrisons wanted to do more to stimulate thinking and behaviour change regarding its suppliers’ packaging.

As a result of this call, Morrisons worked with Recoup to develop guidance for Morrisons’ suppliers on the subject of improving pack design to increase recyclability, and did this by developing a practical tool in the form of a packaging environmental assessment form. The form is intended for use as part of the future requirements for Morrisons’ new product development, to ensure consideration of a packaging’s recyclability is given at opportune times within the supplier process.

It is believed that this early consideration will give rise to an increase in both the amount and the quality of material destined for recycling, and that other retailers may find this useful and relevant.

### Packaging Environmental Assessment Form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>PET Tray 1</th>
<th>PET Tray 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Packaging Type</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Items</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Weight</td>
<td>30.0g</td>
<td>30.0g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total recycled Weight</td>
<td>15.0g</td>
<td>15.0g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remainder</td>
<td>15.0g</td>
<td>15.0g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weighted recyclability score</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Score" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Score" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CO2 emission</td>
<td>121.80g</td>
<td>121.80g</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Snapshot of Morrisons’ packaging environmental assessment form (example only)
**Project aim**

Morrisons wanted the outputs from this project to be relevant and appropriate to the retail business and suppliers so that other retailers wishing to stimulate thinking and action in this area could find these of use.

The desired output was a basic packaging assessment form that could be used by suppliers and presented alongside their proposed packaging option during New Product Development (NPD) processes or at product reviews.

Although simple in its development and reporting, the tool would prompt early thinking of a packaging’s recyclability and provide both suppliers and Morrisons with a quick understanding of the packaging’s recyclability.

The assessment form helps to highlight the importance of recyclability as a consideration of pack design, although other considerations are also important in decision making at Morrisons. The first and foremost consideration during the NPD process is given to a packaging’s ability to protect the product which includes reducing product damage in transit and handling, and extending shelf-life. Cost effectiveness is another consideration. It is after these two points that an assessment of a packaging’s recyclability is considered.

**Methodology**

**Development of the packaging assessment form**

A number of guidance documents are available on the subject of packaging recyclability, however these are not often presented in a practical format. This project therefore incorporated information from two main sources into an Excel spreadsheet to help derive a score for a packaging’s recyclability.

The two main sources were Recoup’s ‘Plastic Packaging - Recyclability By Design’ (RBD) for details regarding the recyclability of plastics specifically, and the On-Pack Recycling Labelling (OPRL) Scheme for guidance on the recyclability of other materials.
The form - user input sheet

Plastic materials
On the input sheet of the form, plastics are broken down by polymer, with separate sections for PET bottles, PET trays, PP, HDPE, PS and PVC. The plastic packaging components and qualities are assigned a rating of “compatible”, “suitable”, and “not suitable” for UK recycling applications which translate into scores of “1”, “40” and “100” and a colour to indicate recyclability potential. The form therefore provides an at-a-glimpse understanding of the make up of the packaging and any issues regarding its packaging recyclability.

Other materials
Although the OPRL scheme is a guidance adopted to help consumers understand packaging recyclability in relation to kerbside collections, it was deemed the most suitable source for use for establishing the recyclability of ‘other materials’ in the UK. Additionally, Morrisons is a signatory to the OPRL scheme and has OPRL labels on much of its packaging. In a similar way as that done with plastics, different materials (and their qualities) were assigned different scores based on the extent of their recyclability.

In order to offer flexibility within the form, the weightings on recyclability can be amended to reflect retailers’ priorities and/or changes to market/industry.
The input sheet allows the user/supplier of the packaging to select the composition of the proposed packaging and the tool provides an overall recyclability score. This score is limited to the score of the least recyclable component - for example, a tray whose colour makes it unsuitable for recycling will be scored as unsuitable for recycling, even if the rest of the components are compatible. The sheet also includes the weights of the different packaging components which are used to calculate the packaging’s carbon equivalent based on its weight and material make-up.

**The form - output sheet**

The information is used to produce the resulting **Packaging Environmental Assessment Form**. This form provides an overall score for the recyclability of the packaging and provides the user the option to add other relevant information to do with the proposed packaging. This includes the percentage of recycled content and consideration given regarding shelf-life. The form also includes an estimated carbon content based on weight, material and incorporated recycled content. The packaging form can then be printed and provided to Morrisons as part of the new product proposal, or product review processes.

**Checking usability**

In order to sense check the outcomes, information about a range of Morrisons’ products was tested to ensure the user input sheet and resulting form worked.
Next steps

The input sheet and form developed as part of the project are in Excel format, and will be adapted technically and incorporated into Morrisons’ IT systems. When ready, the tool will undergo supplier testing before being more widely incorporated in the NPD/review processes. It is expected that from early 2015, the assessment form will be mandatory for their suppliers to complete.

Morrisons believes that the use of the Packaging Environmental Assessment Form will help to increase the awareness and consideration of the recyclability of packaging internally in the business and externally through suppliers. This should in turn have the potential to increase both the amount of recycling and the quality of the resulting recyclate.

Morrisons will promote the tool and its incorporation into new system processes and will provide accompanying guidance to all concerned. This will include more information on how the grading system will be implemented and also mention other important business considerations regarding packaging.

It is hoped that the approach taken by Morrisons to increase awareness in the recyclability of its product packaging will be of interest to other CC3 signatories and their suppliers. Although the basic spreadsheet can be made available to CC3 signatories and others, it should be used as a template only – and will need to be adapted to individual circumstances and amended as recycling guidance, packaging products, technology and collections evolve.
Further considerations

The form developed in the project gives an indication of a packaging’s recyclability – it is not intended to give an absolute recyclability rating. As with Morrisons, retailers need to consider the other major factors relating to a packaging design alongside the assessment score that this provides. It is also worth noting that the recyclability of materials is an evolving assessment due to ongoing changes in technological processes and markets.

During the project, other considerations came to light, and these included:

- the possibility that packaging is restricted to the packing systems - that although retailers may try to influence design, in some cases the packaging is restricted to what kit is available;
- it was found that even within the same product ranges, Morrisons could have different suppliers and hence different packaging formats;
- that some users/suppliers may not be aware of the various plastic polymers in packaging and so may have difficulties inputting information in the assessment form’s input sheet. Even if guidance is provided with the form, other training may be required which should lead to an even greater level of packaging recyclability awareness.

“No-one would dispute the need to use less packaging and recycle the packs we do have. But once we look past this sentiment, which everyone can agree on, the issue becomes more and more complicated. What we as a major retailer want to do is to give our customers as much information and, through material selection, the opportunity to recycle as much packaging as possible.

This tool, developed with the expert help of Recoup and WRAP, helps us look at material choice with a view to recyclability and not get bogged down with carbon foot printing and a host of potential ‘environmentally friendly’ claims. The work has been enlightening and has helped us focus on the issues of post consumer waste recycling and the effect material choice can have on how much our customers are able to recycle.”

Steve Jackson, Packaging Development Manager, Wm Morrison Supermarkets PLC