

COOCK project CIRCOPACK

How will you, as a company, adjust your packaging policy to the circular economy in the future?

To support the companies in this decision making process a project proposal was prepared by Pack4Food, in collaboration with Flanders' FOOD, SensNet and several research institutions. The goal of this project is to develop a scan for companies that enables making considered decisions about the selection of commodities (bio based, recycled, ...) for food packaging. This should provide the companies with the necessary baggage and tools to adjust their packing policy as optimal as possible to the circular economy while maintaining the required functionality and safety of their packaging.

CIRCOPACK is a COOCK project. COOCK stands for Collective Research and Development and Collective Knowledge Diffusion (in Dutch: Collectief Onderzoek en Ontwikkeling en Collectieve Kennisverspreiding). It is a three-year project that started on April 1, 2019.

Food packaging will face several big challenges in the next few years. On the one hand, they are crucial for maintaining the quality of the packed product and in this way, they can contribute to reducing food waste. On the other hand, companies are confronted increasingly with questions from different parties about the type of packaging and its impact on the environment (e.g. migration from recycled materials). The latter cannot be neglected given the strong growing attention for circular economy in food packaging with very ambitious European goals:

- All plastic packaging on the EU market should be reusable or recyclable before 2030;
- Strive towards a recycling percentage of 55% of the packaging waste before 2025;
- Try to use alternative raw materials for the production of plastics when it is clear that they are more sustainable in comparison with those gained from non-renewable resources.

This all causes that a company will be confronted increasingly with the question which type of commodity is most suitable for the packaging of a specific food. In this decision making process the required functions of the packaging will need to be taken into account, as well as the possible sorting and recycling techniques and how this all will influence the sustainability of the packed product eventually. Via LCA studies (Life Cycle Analysis) different packaging alternatives will be compared to one another for a number of selected food groups. The comparison can for instance be made between a plastic packaging vs. a paper/cardboard packaging vs. a combination of plastic and paper/cardboard packaging vs. a bioplastic etc.

Some reasons why this project can be of interest for your company:

- Networking with companies throughout the chain, including recycling companies;
- Receiving tips and tricks about sustainable food packing;
- Help guiding the concrete interpretation of the data by helping to determine the assumptions/to give information and so making better and more adequate calculations possible; these calculations are important because they will influence the future packaging specifications and the coherent (financial) impact on packaging, sorting and recycling processes;

- Testing, using and fine-tuning the online tool and getting insight in the results of your current and simulated packaging materials/processes aiming to define your future marketing, product and packaging developments and strategic processes, or to adjust them and as such strengthen your competitive position.

