

Something fishy about crate supplier's recycled content assumptions – John Mullinder, Executive Director, PPEC



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IFCO REPORT USES INACCURATE DATA FOR CORRUGATED CONTAINERS

ITASCA, IL (May 10, 2016) – The Corrugated Packaging Alliance (CPA) reviewed IFCO's recently-published *Comparative Life Cycle Assessment of Reusable Plastic Containers and Display- and Non-Display Ready Corrugated Containers Used for Fresh Produce Applications*, which was conducted by Franklin Associates and compares the environmental impact of reusable plastic containers to corrugated containers.

"We have been reluctant to comment on IFCO's latest LCA without having access to the actual report that identifies the boundaries, key assumptions and methodologies used in the study. Transparency is a key LCA requirement and publishing the full facts allows them to be fairly and accurately understood", said CPA Executive Director Dennis Colley. "We are disappointed in the approach used by IFCO to announce the report's findings."

"For the LCA's most popular environmental impact indicator, Global Warming Potential (GWP), IFCO uses a baseline assumption of 15 percent recycled content for corrugated. *Life Cycle Assessment of U.S. Industry-Average Corrugated Product* (PE Americas and Five Winds International, December 2009), *Life Cycle Assessment of U.S. Average Corrugated Product* (NCASI, April 2014), and many other publications note corrugated containers' average recycled content of approximately 50 percent, which advantages corrugated containers by almost 40 percent over RPCs for CO₂ emissions or GWP."

The recycled content of corrugated boxes is tied to total system fiber usage and therefore is linked to many variables in an LCA. The amount of new virgin fiber required in the system is offset by the recycled content which affects energy consumption and emissions at the mills.

The demand for recycled fiber also drives the high recovery rate of Old Corrugated Containers (OCC), currently 92.9 percent in 2015 and reduces waste to landfills and subsequent methane generation.

IFCO acknowledges that a higher recycled content (such as 52.7 percent) for corrugated packaging generates superior GWP results for corrugated, as compared to RPCs. However, this analysis is buried in the last section of the report's Executive Summary.

The CPA will publish the corrugated industry's third LCA – including baseline assumptions and documented statistics – in October and expects continued improvements for several environmental impact indicators. The 2014 study revealed a 32 percent reduction in the GWP from the first-ever corrugated industry LCA published in 2009, along with double-digit reductions in eutrophication, respiratory, and fossil fuel depletion indicators.

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The Corrugated Packaging Alliance (CPA) is a corrugated industry initiative jointly sponsored by the American Forest & Paper Association (AF&PA), AICC – the Independent Packaging Association, Fibre Box Association (FBA) and TAPPI. Its mission is to foster growth and profitability of corrugated in applications where it can be demonstrated, based on credible and persuasive evidence, that corrugated should be the packaging material of choice; and to provide a coordinated industry focus that effectively acts on industry matters that cannot be accomplished by individual members. CPA members include corrugated manufacturers and converters throughout North America.