

## Major Brands Waste \$11.4B per Year through Poor Packaging Policies

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KFC, MillerCoors, Kraft Foods, and other large brands are wasting valuable materials through poor packaging sustainability policies, to the tune of \$11.4 billion a year, according to a new study from **As You Sow** and the Natural Resources Defense Council. The report, which looked at the packaging practices of 47 fast food chains, beverage, and consumer goods companies, found that none of them earned “best practices” status for sufficiently recovering packaging materials.

Starbucks, Coca-Cola, and Walmart are leaders among their peers, in that they are taking proactive steps to make less waste, but the study claims that even they are failing to take sufficient responsibility for the packaging waste they generate.

Of special concern, in terms of packaging, is the rapid growth of flexible plastic pouch packaging – like Kraft’s Capri Sun product – which is not recyclable and which can only be landfilled. Goods including dried fruit, detergent and dog food, that used to be sold in recyclable packaging, are shifting to unsustainable pouch packaging.

Companies were ranked based on: source reduction (switching to reusable packaging or packaging with less material); recycled content; recyclability and materials use; and boosting materials recycling rates.

The study also found that of all recyclable packaging sold, only about half ends up actually being recycled – the rest becomes litter or goes to landfill. Plastic packaging, a major contributor to ocean pollution, is the fastest growing form of packaging – but only 14% is recycled, according to the study.

Confusion about what is recyclable may be leading to the low rate of plastic packaging being recycled. A Kelton Global survey conducted around America Recycles Day last November found that only 8 percent of Americans say they recycle all recyclables. Many Americans say they would recycle more if they had better information about what to recycle, particularly for plastics. Forty-six percent say they are more likely to recycle when they know that an item is recyclable, as opposed to when they are unsure. Among those who say they don’t recycle all the time, 28% say it’s because they don’t know which plastic items are recyclable.

This echoes a 2014 National Waste & Recycling Association survey that found that a third of Americans are not clear on what materials go in recycling bins and carts.