

Arab-African Roundtable Discussion on Accelerating the Sustainable Food Packaging Agenda

Jointly organized by Informa Markets, LibanPack,
UNIDO, and the World Packaging Organization



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List of Abbreviations

NPC – National Packaging Center

MENA Region – Middle East and North Africa Region

MSMEs – Micro, Small, Medium Enterprises

LibanPack – Lebanese Packaging Center

IOPG – Institute of Packaging Ghana

IOPPK – Institute of Packaging Professionals Kenya

IPPU – Institute of Packaging Professionals Uganda

UNIDO – United Nations Industrial Development Organization

Sida – Swedish Industrial Development Agency

TIPPA - Tanzania Industries of Printing and Packaging Association

ToT – Training of Trainers

WPO – World Packaging Organization

Executive Summary

The primary roles of food packaging are to extend the shelf life of perishable agro-food products' and preserve them until the last bit of the food is consumed, which is helped by the ease of use features food packaging offers. Additionally, to ensure adequate handling of goods and enable them to travel long distances, to hard to reach areas or international markets, whilst maintaining their safety and quality by protecting them from external factors, such as chemical, biological, and physical. The secondary roles of food packaging inform the consumers with necessary information, such as ingredient and nutritional information, preparation and cooking instructions, storing instructions, etc. Furthermore, food packaging serves as a powerful marketing tool promoting the agro-food products' and ensuring brand visibility by creating a positive image of the company by enabling companies to differentiate a product from their competitors, since food packaging is often the only exposure consumers have prior to making the purchase. The emergence of sustainable and recyclable food packaging, in line with the existing demand for environment-friendly packaging, has majorly benefited the agro-food industry.

To raise awareness on the importance of sustainable packaging, Informa Markets, LibanPack, UNIDO, and WPO organized a roundtable discussion on the 28th of May 2023 on the margins of ProPak MENA processing and packaging exhibition. The roundtable attracted 23 representatives of different continental, regional, and national key stakeholders from the food and packaging industries from 11 countries.

Key outcomes of the discussion were the outlined need to enhance the capacity of national packaging centers in order to be able to adequately accommodate the needs from the local MSMEs in regard to packaging design and export market requirements. Furthermore, the need to accelerate the topic of packaging across the Arab and African regions. Lastly, APO, Informa Markets, LibanPack, UNIDO, and WPO agreed to promote and organize the continental packaging competition to promote packaging innovation in Africa – AfriStars.

Roundtable: Accelerating the Growth of Food & Packaging Manufacturing in the Arab-African Region



Date: 28th of May 2023



Location: Cairo, Egypt (ProPak MENA)



Participants: 23 participants from 11 countries



Sustainable Food Packaging: The Issue

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), in industrialized countries food losses and waste amount to approximately US\$ 680 billion, compared to US\$ 310 billion in developing countries. In food terms, both industrialized and developing countries lose and waste a similar amount of food, respectively 670 and 630 million tons. However, the striking difference is that in developing countries, around 40 per cent of losses and waste takes place at post-harvest and processing stages of the food supply chain, whereas in industrialized countries more than 40 per cent takes place at retail and consumer stages¹. Since in developing countries, food loss and waste happens mostly in the early stages of the food value chain, it can be traced back to the lack of infrastructure and facilities for proper conservation, and financial, managerial, and technical limitations in harvesting techniques. Although, these food loss and waste drivers are mostly connected to developing regions, they also need to be considered by the

food supply chain operations of industrialized countries involved in international trade.

Migration from food packaging materials onto the food varies greatly depending on the raw packaging material. The measured amounts often do not indicate a degree of contamination, however, larger amounts require thorough control. In spite of a significant amount of material migrating from certain food packaging material, the necessary amount of control needed is behind the standards reached in other sectors².

Plastics used for food packaging amount for a significant amount of overall plastic waste polluting the environment. Furthermore, since petroleum reserves are limited and facing depletion, alternative materials that serve the same purpose as conventional plastics are sought after³.

Sustainable Food Packaging: The Solution

Food security: Sustainable food packaging plays an important role in reducing food loss and waste as the primary roles of food packaging are to extend the shelf-life of perishable agro-food products' and preserve them until the last bit of the food is consumed, which is helped by the ease of use features food packaging offers. Additionally, to ensure adequate handling of goods and enable them to travel long distances, to hard to reach areas and international markets, whilst maintaining their safety and quality by protecting them from external factors, such as chemical, biological, and physical factors.

Food safety: Developments in food processing and food packaging have a crucial role in ensuring a safe food supply chain, which is of high importance as food encounters numerous chemical substances during different stages of the food supply chain. Additionally, it is important to ensure that additives such as plasticizers, monomers, and oligomers, which are found in packaging materials do not transfer onto the food upon contact. Therefore, a complete understanding and a careful selection of food packaging materials is necessary in order to avoid negative effects on food safety and quality, outlining that food safety and quality are enhanced with the use of sustainable food packaging which helps limit and control food contamination.

Market access: Sustainable food packaging informs the consumers with necessary information, such as ingredient and nutritional information, preparation and cooking instructions, storing instructions, etc. Furthermore, food packaging serves as a powerful marketing tool promoting the agro-food products' and ensuring brand visibility by creating a positive image of the company by enabling companies to differentiate a product from their competitors, since food packaging is often the only exposure consumers have prior to making the purchase.

Sustainability: An improved design of sustainable food packaging ensures the desired protection to the food product without unnecessary consumption of materials whilst maintaining food safety and quality of the food product. There are a number of extents in which sustainable food packaging contributes and takes part in establishing a more circular economy, ranging from the design and production of the food packaging itself and the optimization of its roles, to the re-use of the post-consumer food packaging. The emergence of sustainable and recyclable food packaging, in line with the existing demand for environment-friendly packaging, has majorly benefited the agro-food industry.

Mandates and the Work of Co-Organizing Partners to Support the Sustainable Food Packaging Initiative



Informa Markets is focused on building strong positions in a series of specialist end markets and subject categories and, through providing expert knowledge, relevant connections and targeted access to buyers, helping the businesses and professionals that work in them to learn more, know more and do more.

Africa Food Manufacturing was established in 2012 and is annually organized in Cairo, Egypt. The event showcases innovative solutions and machinery in food manufacturing and packaging. Food ingredients Africa was launched in 2021, as a part of Africa Food Manufacturing, and is Africa's leading food and beverage exhibition. Likewise, ProPak MENA was launched in 2021 also as a part of Africa Food Manufacturing. ProPak is packaging industry's leading processing and packaging event. Combined these events provide the market with a one-stop sourcing platform for the latest and most innovative ingredients and packaging, processing and logistics solutions from Egypt, the North and Central Africa region, and around the world.



LibanPack is a non-profit private sector association with more than 100 members that acts as a national center for all economic operations concerned with packaging. To support the development of packaging and labelling services in Lebanon, LibanPack was founded in 2008 under the Market Access & Compliance for Lebanese Export (MACLE) project, which is considered one of UNIDO's flagship projects in Lebanon. MACLE was implemented by UNIDO, in collaboration with the Association of Lebanese Industrialists and the World Packaging Organization (WPO).



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UNIDO is the specialized agency of the United Nations with a unique mandate to promote and accelerate sustainable industrial development and plays a crucial role in accelerating the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 9, along with all other industry-related goals of the 2030 Agenda. UNIDO promotes and supports the setup of PPP or private sector driven service centers, and the establishment or upgrading of centers of excellence across agro-value chains, in order to ensure the provision of specialized services needed for the development of targeted agro-value chains and industries. The establishment and the support of a National Packaging Center (NPC) lies at the core of UNIDO's Sustainable Food Packaging Approach, ensuring the provision of specialized training services, disseminating best practices, and promoting packaging as an important industry tool.



World Packaging Organization (WPO) is a non-profit, non-governmental, international federation of national packaging institutes and associations, regional packaging federations and other interested parties including corporations and trade associations that promotes the development of packaging technology, contributes to the development of international trade, and stimulates education and training on packaging. UNIDO and WPO have concluded a strategic partnership by signing a Memorandum of Understanding in November 2017.

Roundtable Discussion

The round-table discussion aimed to promote innovation, increase efficiency, and drive growth in the food and packaging sectors while also helping in attracting foreign investment and technology transfer to the region, which will help improve the industry's overall competitiveness.

The previously mentioned aims to be achieved by involving key associations and institutions in Africa and the Arab World within the food and the packaging industries to:

- Outline the current situation and current challenges they are facing in their representative countries in regard to food and packaging
- Outline the concrete needs they have to tackle and the challenges they are facing
- Outline expectations they have from the co-organizers in addressing their needs and challenges

Roundtable Participants

Some 23 representatives of different continental, regional, and national key stakeholders from the food and packaging industries from 11 countries participated in the roundtable. Table 1, in the Annex, showcases the whole list of participants.

Image 1 & 2 - Roundtable Participants



Roundtable Deliberations

The roundtable started with Mr. Mostapha Khalil, Group Exhibition Director at Informa Markets, giving his opening remarks and welcoming the participants to the discussion. During his opening remarks, Mr. Khalil outlined his gratitude for the number of key stakeholders that were present during the roundtable and further outlined Informa's commitment towards making the roundtable discussion an annual event.



Image 3 - Mr. Mostapha Khalil Opening Remarks on behalf of Informa Markets



Image 4 - Ms. Soha Atallah Opening Remarks on behalf of LibanPack

Following that, Ms. Soha Atallah, LibanPack Director and WPO Vice President, gave her opening remarks and welcomed the participants to the discussion. Ms. Soha outlined the journey of LibanPack, having been co-founded by UNIDO in 2008, to now being an influential packaging center in both Lebanon, having more than 100 members, and the MENA region, co-organizing with UNIDO the Arab StarPack Packaging Award Ceremony.

This was followed by Mr. Ahmed Rezk's opening remarks, Deputy UNIDO Representative in Egypt. Mr. Rezk commemorated Informa Markets, LibanPack, and WPO for co-organizing the roundtable discussion and for giving key continental, regional, and national stakeholders the opportunity to outline their concrete needs and challenges they are facing in their respective countries.

Furthermore, Mr. Ali Badarneh, Chief of Food Security and Food Systems Unit at UNIDO, outlined UNIDO's commitment to further support the development of the food packaging industry in Africa and the MENA region in the Member States. Additionally, Mr. Badarneh also outlined his gratitude to the Swedish Industrial Development Agency (Sida) which is the donor of a UNIDO programme in the MENA region "Support the Arab Accreditation Cooperation to be sustained, effective and internationally recognized as key driving force for regional trade integration."



Image 5 - Mr. Ali Badarneh Opening Remarks on behalf of UNIDO

Lastly, Mr. Pierre Pienaar, WPO President, gave his opening remarks, outlined his gratitude for the number of participants present at the roundtable, and commemorated the efforts of Informa Markets, LibanPack, and UNIDO for co-organizing the important event.

In the following section, remarks made from participants representing each country are outlined in alphabetical order.



Image 6 - WPO President Opening Remarks on behalf of WPO

Egypt

The participants from Egypt initially outlined the relevant progress each of their organizations is making concerning promoting the sustainable packaging agenda in the country, through specialized training and through cooperation between different participating entities, namely the Chamber of Printing & Packaging Industries and the Chamber of Food Industries. Furthermore, the participants outlined their intention to further cooperate and involve more

organizations, such as UNIDO and WPO. This comes as a result of the Chamber of Printing & Packaging Industries being accredited as a WPO full-voting member during the WPO board meeting that took place on the 7th of May 2023 in Dusseldorf, Germany. Lastly, the common need participants from Egypt outlined was the need to have a specialized packaging service center that features a testing laboratory.



Image 7 - Mr. Nadim Elias Addressing the Participants on behalf of the Egyptian Chamber of Printing & Packaging Industries



Image 8 - Egypt's Full-voting Membership to the WPO, May 2023

Ghana

The participants from the Institute of Packaging Ghana (IOPG) outlined a need to better the services of their institute in order to meet the needs of local MSMEs. Namely, IOPG, one of Africa's first full-voting members of WPO and a stakeholder in a UNIDO project addressing the packaging cluster in Ghana in 1999, outlined their commitment to push packaging as a focus area throughout Africa. They are aiming at building local capacities at IOPG as they are facing the challenge of answering to the private sector once they come to their institute of packaging for consulting services.

Namely, local MSMEs approach the center with a problem concerning packaging about the packaging design and export requirements to different international and regional markets, however, due to the lack of capacity and tools, the center cannot act as a center of excellence on packaging and therefore cannot accommodate the requests from the local private sector. Furthermore, they aim to raise the awareness of the local society when it comes to the importance of packaging and the role it holds in the society.



Image 9 - Mr. Kofi Manso Essuman Addressing the Participants on behalf of IOPG



Image 10 - Mr. Kwesi Abaidoo Addressing the Participants on behalf of IOPG

Kenya

The participants from the Institute of Packaging Professionals Kenya (IOPPK) outlined the need to have a specialized packaging service center that would support the local needs of the private sector, in regard to packaging design and export requirements, and support the local government in policy making, following a new bill has been passed which effects the cost of raw packaging material making it unaffordable to MSMEs. Similarly, to IOPG, IOPPK is facing a challenge of addressing the needs of the local private sector due to the lack of capacity and tools. An initial step towards addressing that was the UNIDO session during the Kenya Packaging Summit. Namely, UNIDO organized a

session on the margins of the summit under the topic “Export markets current and emerging sustainable food packaging requirements; European Union as a case study.” For the session, UNIDO brought together LibanPack, PAKKAUS (Finish packaging center), and WPO to write a report on the topic and present it during the summit. Furthermore, during the summit, IOPPK announced the launch of KenStar packaging award, which is the Kenyan national packaging competition. However, IOPPK is in need of support in order to further develop their capacity and to scale the competition to include more stakeholders from the packaging value chain.



Image 11 - Ms. Zippy Ondisa Shiyoya Addressing the Participants on behalf of IOPPK



Image 12 - UNIDO Session during the Kenya Packaging Summit, March 2023

Lebanon

In her remarks, Ms. Soha Atallah, the representative of LibanPack outlined the concrete progress the Lebanese packaging center has made since its establishment during a UNIDO project in 2012. The center has become self-sustainable and is operating successfully on a national, regional, and global basis. On a national basis, it hosts more than 100 private sector members, on a regional basis, it co-organizes the regional student and industry packaging competition promoting packaging innovation in 13 countries in the MENA region. Lastly, on a global basis, Ms. Soha Atallah

has been recognized as the Vice President of WPO in 2017 and since 2021, LibanPack and Ms. Atallah are responsible for organizing the WorldStar Packaging Ceremony. The WorldStar is WPO's flagship global packaging award commemorating global packaging innovation. Given the raising demand from the MENA region and African continent, LibanPack and UNIDO are exploring a joint initiative in order to further develop the center to continue operating on national, regional, and global basis.

Nigeria

The representatives of Nigeria outlined similar challenges to the participants from Ghana and Kenya. Namely, the capacities of the national institute are not sufficient to address local demand from MSMEs. Furthermore, in Nigeria, local MSMEs are also facing the challenge of scarce locally supplied raw packaging material. Moreover, the African Packaging Organization (APO) is based out of Nigeria with Mr. Ahmed Alex Omah as President, and Mr. Joseph Nyongesa as the General Secretary (Also the President of IOPPK). APO is comprised of member institutes from countries across the

continent, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Tanzania, Uganda, and South Africa. During his remarks, Mr. Nyongesa emphasized the need to build the capacity of APO and establish the organization to competently operate on a continental level and be a vehicle for change in Africa. This is necessary in order to for APO to be able to bring attention to African states that the role packaging has is crucial in addressing major development challenges facing the continent. As well as, building packaging capability in Africa by promoting and maintaining the status and business of

those engaged in packaging and encourage the competitiveness of African exports by assisting where possible in the improvement of product presentation through effective packaging. On the other hand, Mr. Nyongesa emphasized the need to build the capacity of the continental packaging competition, AfriStars, in order to promote packaging innovation among academic and the private sector throughout the African continent.



Image 13 - Mr. Joseph Nyongesa Addressing the Participants on behalf of APO

Palestine

The representative from the Palestinian Federation of Paper & Packaging Industries, Mr. Ayman Sbeih, initially presented the recently launched first edition of the Palestinian national packaging competition. Namely, the winners of this competition qualify to participate in the Arab StarPack ceremony organized by LibanPack. Furthermore, Mr. Sbeih noted the importance of the UNIDO organized study tour for

the Palestinian packaging center to Lebanon (LibanPack) and Jordan (JoPack) in 2017. Lastly, Mr. Sbeih emphasized the need to further build the capacity of the center to respond to sectorial need for improved packaging practices and to support the recently launched national packaging competition to include more stakeholders from the packaging value chain.

Tanzania

The representatives from Tanzania, like representatives from Ghana, Kenya, and Nigeria, are facing the challenge of packaging center's lack of capacity and tools to accommodate the needs of the local private sector. Furthermore, similarly to Nigeria, local MSMEs in Tanzania are facing the challenge of scarce locally supplied raw packaging material. On the policy side, local MSMEs face a

challenge with the import duty of raw materials which is discouraging the development of the packaging industry. Therefore, the representative from Tanzania Industries of Printing and Packaging Association (TIPPA), Ms. Christine Williams Walala, emphasized the need to enhance the capacity TIPPA in order to meet the demands of the local MSMEs.

Tunisia

Representatives from the Tunisian packaging center, Packtec, initially commemorated LibanPack on the progress made since 2012 given that Packtec supported and hosted LibanPack for study tours. Throughout the continent and in the region, Packtec is considered a leading center given the successful operation of their packaging lab. Ongoing projects

at the lab are focused around testing biodegradability of various materials and packaging. In this regard, given that packaging testing labs are scarce throughout the continent, Packtec outlined their willingness to disseminate knowledge and experience and support the establishment of packaging test labs.

Uganda

The representative from Institute of Packaging Professionals Uganda (IPPU), Mr. Charles Muyanja, initially introduced the newly formed institute. Namely, the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Cooperatives in collaboration with the private sector actors has established IPPU on the 1st of March 2023. IPPU has been established to provide opportunities for networking, business development, technology advancement, training, and to promote the recognition of

packaging and printing industry as a core segment for agro-processing, export promotion, and industrialization growth. Namely, Mr. Muyanja outlined that the local MSMEs are making use of cheap raw packaging materials due its affordability and are facing challenges in regard to packaging design. Therefore, Mr. Muyanja emphasized the need to enhance the capacity of the newly formed institute to be able to act as a vehicle for change in Uganda.

Roundtable Outcomes

Key outcomes of the roundtable discussion are outlined below:

- All participants stressed on the need to support countries in their efforts to improve the packaging practices across all sectors as a way to improve SMEs competitiveness, address new and emerging market/buyer requirements and improve the sustainability practices in packaging.
- Participants appreciated the support provided by UNIDO, WPO and Informa to their institutes and requested to intensify the support given the huge demand.
- Participants agreed on the important role of national packaging centers in their countries and the need to equip them with the required knowledge, expertise and network to be able to serve their industrial sectors.
- Participant appreciated the progress made at the Arab Starpack competition and its contribution to packaging innovation and requested to launch a similar one for Africa.
- Need to conduct a series of specialized training of trainers (ToT) to the staff of packaging centers is required in order for them to successfully address the needs of MSMEs in regard to the choice of packaging material and export market requirements.
- Need to improve the awareness of the civil society on the importance of sustainable packaging in regard to recycling and waste management and the need to move towards a circular economy.
- Need to support national authorities to draft local regulations and standards regarding packaging compliance such as food grade and other labeling regulations, and on the regularity aspect support the governments in Member States to introduce relevant policies and guidelines.
- Country and region-specific interventions are required to gain an understanding on the needs of the local packaging sector and enhance the services of the local packaging center to operate on a national basis and become a vehicle of for change.
- APO, Informa Markets, LibanPack, UNIDO, and WPO agreed to support the promotion and development of the African packaging competition, AfriStar, and enable it to bring African packaging innovation on the global level – Similar to what Arab StarPack was able to achieve by having winners from the Arab Region for the first time in the history of WorldStar organized since 1970.

Call to Action

A common approach has been outlined to address the above-mentioned challenges, which is to build the capacity of packaging centers to operate on a as center of excellence on packaging. In this area, UNIDO and WPO have a Memorandum of Understanding which focuses on establishing national packaging centers of excellences and enables them to act as actors of change in Member States. One of UNIDO's flagship projects in this area is the establishment of LibanPack, a co-organizer of the roundtable. Given the number of successful projects in this area, UNIDO developed a programme to establish national packaging centers, with WPO as the implementing partner.

The programme has a threefold impact. Firstly, the economic impact leads to a higher GDP and an increased trade of agro-food products. Secondly, the social impact contributes to job creation and improved public health. Thirdly, the environmental impact leads to better utilization of resources

and reduced waste as a result of recycling. Moreover, the approach improves the competitiveness of the food and agri-business sector and upgrades the packaging industry which is contributing to economic growth. To achieve the abovementioned, UNIDO intervenes at the partnership and policy level, as well as through institutional capacity building, specialized training for skill development, and technology and knowledge transfer. Resulting in an established demand-driven enabling environment for packaging, an operational national packaging center with a set of services, upgraded practices of the packaging industry, and upgraded targeted agro value chain/s product packaging. Moreover, improving institutional capacities of packaging manufacturers, facilitating access to services and resources, ensuring target value chain actors comply with market requirements, and improving the general awareness on the importance of sustainable packaging.

Annex 1 – Full List of Participants

#	Country	Entity	Name	Position
1	Australia	WPO	Mr. Pierre Pienaar	President
2	Austria	UNIDO	Mr. Ali Badarneh	Chief
3	Austria	UNIDO	Mr. Aleksa Mirkovic	Consultant
4	Egypt	Chamber of Printing & Packaging Industries	Mr. Nadim Elias	Chairman
5	Egypt	Chamber of Food Industries	Mr. Ashraf El Gazayeli	Chairman
6	Egypt	Egyptian Accreditation Council	Mr. Hany El Dessouki	Chairman
7	Egypt	Engineering Export Council	Ms. May Helmy	Executive Director
8	Egypt	National Food Safety Authority	Mr. Tarek El Houby	Chairman
9	Egypt	UNIDO Regional Hub in Egypt	Mr. Ahmed Rezk	Deputy UNIDO Representative
10	Egypt	Informa Markets	Mr. Mostapha Khalil	Group Exhibition Director
11	Ghana	Institute of Packaging Ghana	Mr. Kwesi Abaidoo	President
12	Ghana	Institute of Packaging Ghana	Mr. Kofi Manso Essuman	Director
13	Kenya	Food & Science Technology platform of Kenya	Mr. George Ooko	President

14	Kenya	Institute of Packaging Professionals Kenya	Ms. Zippy Ondisa Shiyoya	Executive Director
15	Lebanon	WPO / LibanPack	Ms. Soha Atallah	VP / President
16	Nigeria	African Packaging Organization	Mr. Joseph Nyongesa	General Secretary
17	Nigeria	Nigerian Institute of Food Science & Technology	Ms. Adenowo Bolanle Osinowo	Vice President
18	Palestine	Palestinian Federation of Paper & Packaging Industries	Mr. Ayman Sbeih	Executive Director
19	Tanzania	Tanzania Industries of Printing and Packaging Association (TIPPA)	Ms. Christine Williams Walala	Government Affairs Coordinator
20	Tanzania	Tanzania Chamber of Commerce, Industry & Agriculture	Mr. Edmund Pancras Mkwawa	President
21	Tunisia	Packtec Tunisia	Mr. Abdelkarim Hamdaoui	Executive Director
22	Tunisia	Packtec Tunisia	Ms. Hager Benmami	Marketing Director
23	Uganda	Institute of Packaging Uganda	Mr. Charles Muyanja	President

Endnotes

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