Draft definition - sustainable packaging

Packaging will support sustainable development if the following principles are met:

1. It adds real value to society by effectively containing and protecting products as they move through the supply chain and by supporting informed and responsible consumption.
2. Packaging systems are designed to use materials and energy as efficiently as possible throughout the packaged product life cycle including its interactions with associated support systems.
3. Packaging materials are cycled continuously through natural or industrial systems.
4. Packaging components do not pose any health or environmental risks to humans or ecosystems. When in doubt the precautionary principle applies.

Rationale

This introduces the goal (**sustainable development**) as well as key ideas such as the need to consider the **product/packaging system** as a whole and to consider the entire **product life cycle**.

It considers the three elements of sustainability: the **economic** or commercial functions that packaging fulfils (e.g. transport, shelf life), its **social** functions (e.g. safety, convenience) and **environmental** functions (minimizing impacts).

It also differentiates between different levels of concern, i.e. from the macro levels of **society** (prosperity and well-being), the intermediate levels of the **product/packaging system** (efficiency and effectiveness including product waste prevention) to the micro levels of **packaging materials** (closed cycles or zero waste) and **packaging components** (safe or non-toxic).

	Packaging will support sustainable development if the following principles are met:	
Principle		*Levels at which the principle is applied*
1. Effective	It adds real value to society by effectively containing and protecting products as they move through the supply chain and by supporting informed and responsible consumption.	**1. Society**
2. Efficient	Packaging systems are designed to use materials and energy as efficiently as possible throughout the product life cycle. This should include material and energy efficiency in interactions with associated support systems such as storage, transport and handling.	**2. Packaging system**
3. Cyclic	Packaging materials are cycled continuously through natural or (industrial) technical systems, minimizing material degradation and/or the use of upgrading additives.	**3. Packaging material**

4. Safe	Packaging components do not pose any or risks to human health or ecosystems. When in doubt the precautionary principle applies.	**4. Packaging component**

Comments on this draft should be provided to Helen Lewis, email helen@sustainablepack.org.