

Polystyrene Packaging Council (PSPC) of South Africa

THE PSPC was formed in February 2007. The basis of the formation is related to the need for the polystyrene industry to actively demonstrate its commitment to the environment (through collection and recycling) and the safety and health of polystyrene food packaging users.

Polystyrene has a considerable contribution to make to the life of the consumer, be it in the form of fast food packaging or in the form of rigid packaging.

Polystyrene as an industry sector contributes significantly to job creation, economic growth, employment and convenience living and that is supported by a well structured environmental obligation in ensuring that all eco responsibilities are met and addressed in the proper way.

The Council is acutely aware that especially expanded polystyrene ('the white stuff') can be a serious environmental nuisance and intends to build on the existing collection and recycling efforts that work well with consumer goods packaging. The council will also endeavor to educate the market regarding littering and the appropriate ways of recycling polystyrene. The same applies to rigid polystyrene packaging. Polystyrene can be and is being recycled in South Africa.

The Council's objectives both short and long

term are to set up resources and mechanisms to deal with projects that enhance the reputation of polystyrene packaging and that grow the industry whilst ensuring effective recycling activities in South Africa. It is so that there is food legislation in place in countries around the world with the necessary data which proves that polystyrene is not harmful to the consumer or the environment. The Council will make use of this data to prove their case. The Council will educate and communicate whilst supporting activities that improve the industry in a generic manner (such as recycling, waste to energy, marine research, etc.)

The Polystyrene packaging industry is actively involved in research, design and development of all issues relating to its products. In order to stay abreast of environmental issues, market expectations and manufacturer responsibilities, the following objectives are part of the PSPC's business and marketing strategies:

- To establish national quality standards and industry guidelines with respect to the manufacturing, recycling and use of all polystyrene products.

- To introduce and align the industry and its role players to international best practice in relation to the manufacture, recycling and use of all polystyrene products.

- To educate end-users, legislators, the media and other interested parties on the benefits and viability of polystyrene as a packaging solution by means of effective marketing tools and media avenues.

- Provide a forum for the industry to discuss activities influencing its sustainability.

A key benefit of Polystyrene is that it can be recycled. Polystyrene materials can be reprocessed and molded into new packaging products. Polystyrene recycling programs have been established in several countries around the world, making polystyrene a very popular and flexible product.

Polystyrene is easily recycled through the following means:

- Breaking the scrap material into beads through a granulator and then mixing the material with new beads before molding.

- Compacting the granulated material in special compactors to produce "bricks". These bricks are then sent to a recycling depot to produce various products, such as timber look-alike items.

This material is not generally a high profile target in recycling terms (unlike glass, paper, aluminum cans, batteries, tyres etc.). Users may not have considered just how much Polystyrene they are dumping. Enquiry No: 58