

The system of reusable containers in foodstuff distribution is the most sustainable

The reusable plastic containers used in farming-foodstuff distribution have a 20- year useful life cycle and can be reused in up to 100 operations. This means huge environmental advantages, as it enables savings in resources and cutting down waste, according to a study by the Fraunhofer Institute and the University of Stuttgart on the sustainability of packaging systems in Europe.

The study make a comparison between the three packaging systems (plastic, cardboard and wooden boxes) used in the five most important countries in fruit and greens production (Spain, Italy, France, Netherlands and Germany) and in four of the biggest purchasing markets (France, Netherlands, Great Britain and Germany).

The research done by the Fraunhofer Institute compares the effects on the environment of the different container systems, in five categories: eutrophisation (contribution to over-fertilisation); destruction of the ozone layer; formation of photo-oxidants; acidification (contribution to acid rain) and greenhouse effect.

In an overall sense, reusable plastic containers are the type which obtains the best results as compared with other kinds of disposable packaging items:

49% less potential for greenhouse gas missions.

33% less potential for reduction of ozone.

46% less potential for summer smog.

69% less acidification potential (contribution to acid rain).

78% less eutrophisation (contribution to overfertilisation).

In short, the system of reusable containers forms part of the European Union environmental strategy based on the “three Rs”: **reduction** (of CO₂ emissions), **reuse**, **recycling**.