

By CHERYL POO
cherylpoo@thestar.com.my

On the safe side

With Tupperware, safety is a priority when it comes to food-contact plastics.

EVER since the risks of using food and beverage plasticware was highlighted not so long ago, the public has taken a special interest in these ubiquitous products which have been around for over half a century.

The key question remains: Are food-contact plastics safe for everyday use? What about microwaving or reusing plastic, and the alleged food contamination that follows?

In a recent interview with Tupperware Brands Corporation, worldwide quality management and research and development director Jan Stevens provided

insight into the efforts that the brand invests in, in order to generate food contact plastics which are safe for the consumer and easy on the environment.

Are Tupperware products environmentally friendly?

Tupperware products are envi-

ronmentally friendly by design, technical development, raw material selection and manufacturing quality. The designs are such that they allow for the products to be manufactured with in-process and post-consumer recycling in mind. Raw materials are selected based on their safety for human use, food contact and the absence of contaminants that could put a burden on the environment.

During the product development process, it is assured that Tupperware products will last a lifetime, thus reducing the amount of waste that is put into the environment. Our products are meant to be reused thanks to their durability. Utmost care is taken at every step of manufacturing to make sure that minimal energy is consumed and minimum waste is produced. Plastic waste produced during the manufacturing of Tupperware products is submitted to an internal recycling process without any plastic waste being discharged into the environment.

Are new food containers made from recycled material?

Recycling of plastic waste happens internally, within our own manufacturing plants, as well as externally.

For internal recycling, production scraps are reground, extruded and fed back into the production process of new Tupperware products. The recycled material and the products made thereof have the same properties and quality as those products made from virgin, non-recycled material. This has been demonstrated through thorough testing in our own and in external laboratories.

The external recycling process consists of the recovery of products that are at the end of their lifecycle.

As Tupperware has no control over the use of these products and what they would be subjected to, we cannot guarantee their appropriateness for re-use in the production of new Tupperware food containers.

Plastic material obtained from external recovery is therefore not used to make new Tupperware products intended to come into contact with food. But it can be reused to make products that are not intended for food contact.

How much of the externally recycled material is sold to other manufacturers and how will consumers be able to identify these products?

There are geographical differences (that determine this), but about 2% of the annual sales volume is recovered from customers either as defective or as end-of-life products.

The recovered products are ground up and the reground material is supplied to companies which turn this material into a wide variety of non-food contact products such as flowerpots and garden furniture.

When a consumer purchases a Tupperware food container, he is assured that no externally recycled material is used in its manufacture.

The raw materials used for these products are, in most cases, indicat-

ed on the main part of the product by means of the Raw Material Identification Code, a triangular arrow, encircling a number ranging from one to seven, representing the raw material type or group.

For alternative products (other than Tupperware) made from externally recycled material, the same material identification code applies but the products will not carry the food pictogram (glass and fork), indicating that they are not intended for food-contact use.

It is up to the Third Party Manufacturer of these non-food contact items to indicate the level or percentage of recycled material used in his products.

Is starch-based plasticware a credible alternative?

We are well aware of the development of starch-based resins and plastics, as research in this field is a main part of our development programmes. These materials are commonly known as either biodegradable plastics or bio-plastics.

However, in spite of all the development efforts that are being done on these materials, they have a number of shortcomings, the most important being the inferior physical properties compared to the materials currently used to make Tupperware products; they are not durable, cannot withstand the heat generated in dishwashers and are not as stain-resistant. Therefore, these starch-based materials are, at present, unsuitable to produce durable plastic food containers. On top of that, their availability in the current market is very limited. These materials have seen some use in the plastic sheet and bag market but here one must carefully consider the environmental benefits.

In most cases, in order to obtain similar properties as conventional plastics, the sheets and bags have to be much thicker which again increases the amount of plastic that is put on the market.

Their biodegradability is only guaranteed under industrial and controlled

composting conditions, which are not always available everywhere.

Does Tupperware have CSR programmes?

The Tupperware sustainability programme is a very comprehensive one as it encompasses the promotion of a more sustainable environment in the office, in the manufacturing sector and at home with our customers and employees.

The activities and focus points are a balanced mix of smaller and major products, including:

- > Avoiding the consumption of paper and plastic material in the office and packaging of our products.
- > Reduction of energy consumption in our manufacturing plants and during the transportation of our products.
- > Educational programmes for our employees, sales force and customers on how to reduce, recover and avoid waste, and recycle.
- > Joint programmes with external organisations such as universities to promote a sustainable lifestyle.
- > Design of products, such as the ECO Tupperware range, that help our customers avoid unnecessary waste.

All these activities and programmes are laid down in our annual Corporate Sustainability Report where we update the community on our results and activities over the past year and demonstrate our plans to continuously improve these results in the future.

What is Tupperware's stand on using Bisphenol A since studies suggest that the material can leak into the food/drinks?

Bisphenol A (BPA) is the building block of polycarbonate. Tupperware is aware of the many reports on the alleged effect of BPA on human health and its suggested leakage into food.

We closely follow up on all the latest developments and studies in this field and can confirm, through exhaustive testing of our products at external expert laboratories, that the BPA run-off from our products is largely within the acceptable limits as stated by the most stringent regulations around the world.

These acceptance limits and their safety have, very recently, been reconfirmed by the highest scientific body in the European Union, namely the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA).

Safety first:
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