

Inside the Conversation: Navigating Sustainability Pressures and Tariff Impacts in Packaging

Insights from FPSA's Packaging Network

At a recent meeting of FPSA's Packaging Network, members discussed two pressing topics shaping their operations today: the evolving realities of sustainability and the shifting impact of tariffs on global sourcing and production capacity.

Sustainability: Effort vs. Impact

Packaging professionals are seeing a surge in questions about sustainability – particularly around recycling, waste diversion, and end-of-life material handling. While companies are working hard to be more eco-conscious, frustration is mounting.

"There's growing skepticism," one member noted. "We're doing our part – reclaiming, regrinding, reducing – but if downstream partners aren't actually closing the loop, then what's the point?"

Other members echoed concerns around:

Choosing credible sources for education and dialogue (e.g., waste handlers, retailers, or logistics companies)

Communicating clearly about what sustainability efforts are within the company's control

Understanding ROI, especially when sustainability measures add cost but don't guarantee environmental follow-through downstream

The group agreed there's a need for practical, third-party input to help clarify what's real, what's greenwashing, and how to measure what matters.

Tariffs and the Return of Domestic Tooling

While the sustainability conversation raised challenges, the group also shared a surprising upside: recent tariff changes are reshaping global sourcing trends, particularly in the plastics and tooling sectors.

One member reported that after a slow few years, demand has spiked. "We've seen molds coming back from overseas, and it's driving a sharp uptick in production. It's forced overtime, in a good way."

The discussion touched on:

Post-election shifts in demand and policy

Tariff-driven reshoring of molds and components

How some companies are benefiting from the realignment – even as others face continued uncertainty.

What's Next

The Packaging Network is exploring ways to bring in expert perspectives on both topics – from sustainability implementation to tariff forecasting – in future sessions.

This is just one example of how FPSA Councils bring members together to share expertise, stay ahead of industry changes, and collaborate on real-world solutions.