



# WATER RESISTANT PAPER PACKAGING

| Sam Upton

With a flurry of announcements by companies launching 100% recyclable water-resistant paper for packaging, we look at how this could transform the packaging industry.

It's widely accepted that paper and cardboard have a wide range of qualities, making them the packaging material of choice. They are versatile, light and protective, with the ability to be printed easily. Then of course, there's the highly significant fact that with a current recycling rate of 87% in Australia and 58% in New Zealand, paper-based packaging is one of the most sustainable forms of packaging available.

There is, however, one superpower that paper doesn't currently possess – the ability to resist water. While this may not be too worrying for the average parcel delivered to the door by van, there are plenty of products within the global logistics network that can be quickly ruined by the presence of moisture, such as electronics and clothes.



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## Water Resistant

While paper with barrier properties is nothing new, the amount of plastic used in them make them difficult to recycle. This is why the development of 100% recyclable water-resistant paper is such significant news in the world of packaging.

One of the first companies to announce the launch of water-resistant paper for packaging was Mondi who, together with German machine supplier Beck Packautomaten, developed 'Functional Barrier Paper'. The packaging is designed to replace plastic packaging for e-commerce, made of 95% paper, making it recyclable in existing paper waste streams. Mondi also adds that the paper is responsibly sourced, and made from renewable materials.

"All types of goods are being transported around the globe on a daily basis," said Thomas Lunz, the Industry Group Manager of Functional Paper at Mondi Functional Paper & Films.

"The need to create bespoke packaging that reduces waste, protects a wide range of products and delivers on sustainability targets is enormous. Our FunctionalBarrier Paper enables online retailers to continue reducing the use of unnecessary plastic."

The second paper company to throw their hat into the ring is Smurfit Kappa, which recently launched AquaStop, a water-resistant paper that can be recycled along with standard paper-based packaging. AquaStop is designed to replace single-use plastic in packaging, able to offer the same barrier properties that protect the goods from exposure to water and condensation.

"Our product development team has been dedicated to developing something that offers the required functionality and at the same time is 100% recyclable in standard recycling mills," says Lars Henriksson, the VP of Product Development at Smurfit Kappa's Paper Division.



"This has given a unique combination of functionality and sustainability credentials. The focus is on designing the optimal packaging where AquaStop can replace today's 100% plastic solutions or laminated products which requires special recycling technologies."

## The Revolution Starts Here

There's little doubt that recyclable water-resistant paper could transform the packaging industry. With this final tool in the paper packaging toolkit, the e-commerce world could start to phase out single-use plastics forever. The global e-commerce packaging industry is worth more than \$49.2 billion, meaning there will be no shortage of companies launching new innovations to improve its sustainability further. Watch this space.