

Industrial Sector

Graphical, Paper and Media

(Packaging Industry)



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Industry profile

Packaging industry:

- The industry employs 3% of the UK manufacturing industry workforce
- The industry has sales in excess of £10 Billion.
- Productivity is more than double that of all industries' average performance.
- Across their full lifecycle, the environmental difference between glass, metal, paper and plastics packaging is tiny compared with the environmental savings they provide by protecting goods and food.
- The industry accounts for some 5% of the overall manufacturing sector of the UK economy.
- Paper & board is the largest individual segment comprising close to 46% of packaging industry value, followed by plastics (31%), metals (12%) and glass (6-7%).
- Packaging is a large and important business both in the UK and globally. It is an unusual sector in that it cannot exist on its own. The nature of packaging is such that it is intertwined with many other industries, such as food & drink, personal care, pharmaceuticals and chemicals (to name just a few.)

Trade union profile

- The GMB are also organised in the sector

Major organised employers:

Contego Packaging DS Smith Plc Chesapeake Crown Packaging MeadWestvaco Amcor

Collective bargaining:

Unite GPM Sector holds national pay and conditions agreements with:

Confederation of Paper Industries (paper, corrugated packaging, board, tissue & paper products).

British Printing Industry Federation (packaging, print & board)

Graphic Enterprise Scotland (printed packaging in Scotland). Besides these national agreements many Unite members work under national group agreements negotiated with their employers, at chapel level (workplace); branch and national level.

Unite is affiliated to the European Mine, Chemical and Energy Workers Federation (EMCEF) and also the International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers' Unions (ICEM), Uni-Graphical and Uni-Europa Graphical

The sector skills council is Proskills.

Workers Uniting

The Graphical, Paper and Media sector of Unite is working closely with our brothers and sisters in the USA/Canada via Workers Uniting. Workers Uniting is the name of the global union created by Unite and the United Steelworkers (USW). Workers Uniting is the union of 3 million members of Unite and the USW working together to protect their jobs, pay and benefits in the face

of the ever increasing power of multinational companies.

There are a number of companies in the packaging sector (for example Crown and MeadWestvaco) who employ workers from both unions, and they have been busily coordinating bargaining strategies and sharing information.

Key sector issues

Energy

The Packaging industry is a highly intensive energy usage industry. The UK's current energy market arrangements, particularly for intensive users of energy, are undermining the sustainability of the UK's Packaging industry. Unite agrees with the UK Government that energy policy has to be framed within the context of a sustainable framework and the threat posed by climate change. However, large-scale users of gas and electricity are paying more than their European competitors. Unite is concerned that the current energy prices will displace manufacturing in the UK and is actively lobbying the Government on the issue. The key issue for Unite and its members in the Packaging industry is the relative competitiveness of energy prices compared both to European and global markets.

Corrugated Packaging

This sector of the industry is higher profile and consumers, led by the media, complain of "unnecessary packaging" as contributing to "Global Warming". Largely speaking this is nonsense and it should be noted that Paper and Packaging production is sourced through sustainable means; (fast-growing forest that is managed for the purpose) and about 65% recycling.

Skills

The UK Packaging sector is faced with skill shortages. The shortages are caused by an ageing workforce and failure to recruit young workers will lead to a culture of overtime, as employers seek to produce more without recruiting. Sub-contractors continue to provide an alternative to employing direct staff for many companies.



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