

Sustainability Awards 2021: Rules and Guidelines

The Sustainability Awards is organised by Packaging Europe and judged by an independent, international panel of experts.

Basic criteria

1. The core principle for each category in the competition is to reward the project or innovation that, in the judges' view, has the greatest significance in terms of its positive impact on sustainability. This can be understood either in its immediate performance metrics or in the potential transformative impact.
2. Judges are also instructed to consider the holistic sustainability implications, even when the category emphasizes a particular attribute. For example, if the criterion is 'resource efficiency', the winning entry should not simply be the one with the biggest weight reduction, but also offer a viable solution that does not result in reduced performance according to other environmental criteria.
3. The Sustainability Awards promotes rigorous assessment of substantive impacts. Therefore, submissions should be supported wherever possible and appropriate by empirical data, preferably with details of testing methodology.
4. Entries to the Sustainability Awards 2021 may be submitted to the following competition categories:
 - **Bio-Based Packaging:** development or innovative use of new, bio-based materials with significant positive impact or potential in packaging applications.
 - **Resource efficiency:** innovations in packaging that do more with less. For instance, downgauging materials or reducing their carbon footprint without increasing the environmental impact of the packaged product.
 - **Driving the circular economy:** breakthroughs and innovations in recycling technology or reusable packaging systems; initiatives promoting increase in recycling rates or nurturing demand for recycle; groundbreaking use of recycled feedstocks.
 - **Recyclable packaging:** innovations in packaging materials to facilitate recyclability; design for recyclability.
 - **Machinery:** innovations in engineering that have increased production line environmental efficiencies (in energy or water consumption or waste reduction) or facilitated adoption of sustainable packaging materials.
 - **Best practice:** retailers or brand owners that have achieved the most in minimizing the environmental impact of packaging and its supply chain through wider strategies and projects.
 - ***New category for 2021*** – Ecommerce: Outstanding packaging innovations delivering holistic sustainability gains in e-commerce and direct-to-consumer channels
 - **Pre-Commercialized Innovation:** sustainable packaging innovations of any type that have not yet been launched on the market. Note: the winner of this category is not eligible to be considered for the overall winner of the Sustainability Awards.
5. Please note, there is an additional 'Readers' Award' category, which is separate from the main Sustainability Awards. Nominations are made, and subsequently voted on, by Packaging Europe readers. For this category submissions are not accepted from the organizations responsible for the innovations and the expert judging panel has no role in selecting the winners.

Submissions rules and eligibility

6. The innovations or achievements entered into the competition must have been launched or announced no earlier than 1 January 2020.
7. Supporting information for submissions should be provided in English.
8. Please refer to the descriptions of the individual categories for information about eligibility to enter a particular category.
9. For all categories (except 'Pre-Commercialized Innovation') submissions that are products or technologies must be already commercially launched. If a product is not yet in commercial use, it should be submitted to the category 'Pre-Commercialized Innovation'.
10. Packaging Europe reserves the right to change the category to which a valid submission has been entered if it deems this appropriate. Packaging Europe is not obliged to inform participants in the Sustainability Awards if it amends the category of their entry.
11. The competition is open to entries from organizations and initiatives from the following organizations:
 - Manufacturers and innovators across the packaging technology and waste disposal value chain, including suppliers of raw materials, converters, contract manufacturers, machinery suppliers and recycling technologies
 - Brand owners
 - Retailers
 - Early stage R&D, including academic sector (likely to be applicable to the 'Pre-Commercialized Innovation' category – see point 4 above)
 - Individual entrepreneurs and designers
 - Multi-stakeholder consortiums and projects
 - NGOs
 - Local municipalities
12. The competition is open to the following types of entries:
 - Generic packaging substrates, formats, technologies and raw materials
 - Specific packaging products and solutions, including machinery
 - Wider projects and initiatives aiming to boost sustainability through best practice, collaboration, research, etc.
13. Collaborative projects can be submitted as a joint entry, e.g. packaging developed jointly by a brand owner and packaging specialist. Collaborators are encouraged to work together on their submissions and share the credit.
14. There is a maximum of five entries per submitting organization. Large organizations with multiple business units are encouraged to coordinate internally to decide which innovations or initiatives to nominate. Packaging Europe reserves the right to withdraw submissions from the competition if this limitation has been exceeded. Where autonomous organizations within the same group or holding company can reasonably be considered to be effectively separate organizations, the 'five entries' rule may be waived. Packaging Europe reserves the right to make final judgements on such questions.

15. Participants cannot submit the same product or initiative in more than one category. Otherwise, Packaging Europe reserves the right to withdraw the submission from one or all categories.
16. If a product or innovation has been submitted to the Sustainability Awards in the past, it cannot be submitted a second time unless it has undergone sufficient advancement to be considered effectively a new entity.

Judging

17. Judges are to base their decisions on their objective assessment of the merits of entries and are instructed that no preference should be given to past or present Packaging Europe contributors, advertisers or sponsors.
18. Judges should recuse themselves from judging any submission where there is a conflict of interest, in particular if they represent or have a commercial relationship with the organization that made the submission.
19. Individual judges' grading and comments during deliberation will remain confidential.
20. Judges access and grade the submissions through the same online portal to which entries are submitted. Judging will take place across two rounds. In the first round, sub-groups of the jury will each assess a random selection of submissions in order to select those with sufficient merit to be considered as finalists. In the second round, the entire judging panel will assess all finalists across all competition categories.
21. Judges may instruct Packaging Europe to request additional information or clarifications from the finalists following the first round of voting. On receipt, such information will be shared with judges.
22. Winners are selected based on the aggregated grades of judges. Therefore, the results cannot be attributed to the opinions of any individual judge.
23. The overall winner 'Best Sustainable Packaging Innovation' will be the entry representing a particular innovation or innovation project that accrues the highest overall score among the finalists in the second round of voting. In the event that the highest scoring entry is a broad sustainability strategy entered into the 'Best Practice' category or if it is a pre-commercialized product, this will not be considered for the 'Best Sustainable Packaging Innovation' prize.

Sustainability Awards 2021 timeline

Submissions open: 25 January 2021

Submissions close: 24 March 2021 at 23:59 (US Pacific time)

Finalists announced: 17 May 2021

Winners announced: 29 September 2021 (live at awards ceremony at the Sustainable Packaging Summit at FachPack, Nuremberg, Germany)