



PAPERTECH

FRESHTRAYS  
PROTEIN

# A Guide to Sustainable Paper Trays for Fresh Protein:

How to Thrive in a Changing World by Successfully Switching to Pressed Paperboard







# Shoppers want more protein.

Consumers are shifting to protein-rich diets and data shows they're willing to pay more for sustainable, eco-friendly products. Meanwhile, states are tightening packaging mandates and costs are rising. However, many protein processors remain cautious after poor experiences with early "sustainable" trays.

## The good news?

Switching to recyclable pressed paperboard trays is now simple. FRESHTRAYS paper trays deliver the performance, compliance and sustainability you need to meet market demands. You can keep your fresh protein production rolling, protect your product quality and preserve your brand's reputation — all while staying ahead of changing consumer behaviors and regulations.

## This guide will show you:

-  **How changing consumer behavior and regulations are driving sustainability**
-  **How paper trays give your fresh protein better shelf appeal**
-  **How pressed paperboard trays can integrate seamlessly into existing production lines**
-  **Why domestic suppliers are critical to a successful transition**



## Certified Sustainable:



How2Recycle



FOREST  
STEWARDSHIP  
COUNCIL

# Plastic and foam are piling up. New laws are emerging.

Non-recyclable packaging is becoming more costly.

**400 M  
Metric Tons**

of plastic are produced  
worldwide every year

**Less than 10% is recycled**

Paper packaging  
in the U.S. has a  
recycling rate of

**74%**

Plastic packaging  
in the U.S. has a  
recycling rate of

**5%**

**12 States**

have introduced EPR  
legislation for packaging

**7 Packaging  
Bills**

have already been  
passed in the U.S.



This massive recyclability gap isn't just an environmental statistic. It's a warning sign. Regulators, retailers and consumers are demanding a change because living in a world with landfills full of plastic and foam is not sustainable.

Switching to sustainable paper trays isn't just about going "green." It's a strategic advantage for your business to stay ahead of regulations before they impact your operation.

Paper trays are recyclable and made from renewable fiber, which demonstrates a commitment that resonates with consumers, retailers and a company's sustainability goals. This helps you reduce risk and secure long-term stability while staying cost-competitive with traditional plastic.

## What is EPR?

Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) laws shift the financial burden of packaging waste from cities to the companies that produce it. For food processors, this means non-recyclable packaging can trigger compliance fees, higher disposal costs and regulatory scrutiny — which will be passed down to your company.








# Shoppers' habits are evolving.

Sustainability directly impacts purchasing decisions.



Consumers are choosing brands that match their values. Packaging is the first impression and paper trays send the right message.

## The benefits start immediately:

-  **Loyalty and repeat business:** Shoppers reward values-driven brands, turning purchases into advocacy.
-  **Retailer support:** Sustainable products make it easier to secure shelf space and strengthen partnerships.
-  **Cost-competitive:** With consumers willing to pay more for eco-friendly products, you can invest in sustainability — creating a win-win where your business can thrive and consumers feel good about their purchase.

## Consumers want packaging they can feel good about.

This is a huge opportunity for brands that want to project a healthier image and stand out on the shelf.

**PaperTech's sustainable paperboard trays make it simple.** Our paper trays not only match an organic look and feel with natural paper appearance, but they also have the structural rigidity and moisture-resistant barrier coating to preserve product integrity for fresh protein.

**71%** of shoppers deliberately choose products with sustainable packaging

**54%** of shoppers have consciously purchased products with sustainable packaging in the last six months

**60%** of shoppers said they would pay more for a sustainable good

# Shoppers aren't just buying fresh protein.

They're buying a healthy lifestyle.



Your customers want their fresh protein to stay fresh, appealing and nutritious. They also want eco-friendly packaging that won't compromise quality. Our durable, moisture-resistant paperboard trays are engineered for that reason.

Online searches for **"High Protein"** Doubled  
from 2024 to 2025

**61%** of Americans  
increased their  
protein intake  
in 2024

## Consumers want more protein in their diets.

Packaging plays an important role in how today's shoppers choose their fresh protein. With sustainable paper trays, you give customers what they want: high-quality protein in natural-looking packaging they can feel good about. The result? Stronger brand recognition and advocacy that can turn switching to sustainable packaging into a cost-neutral (or even profitable) choice.

## FRESHTRAYS paperboard trays are purpose-engineered for fresh protein.

Engineered with rigid corners, durable flanges and tightly compressed pleats, our sustainable trays deliver the strength and seal integrity processors are looking for to build shopper confidence.

🌿 **Protein arrives at the store looking fresh because our paper trays withstand processing and handling.** With vibrant, natural-looking protein on the shelf, shoppers will feel more confident and are more likely to purchase.

🌿 **A paperboard tray free of cracks, dents or flimsy corners tells shoppers they're choosing a better protein product.** When packaging reflects quality, shoppers see the product as worth the price — and sustainable paper trays make that connection clear.

🌿 **You can fit up to 250% more trays per truck compared to foam.** Because paper trays are more space-efficient, that means fewer trucks on the road, lower transport costs and a stronger alignment with your sustainable image.

**50%** of Shoppers  
eat more protein to  
increase energy and  
manage weight

**71%** of Shoppers  
believe meat and  
poultry belong in  
a healthy lifestyle

# Your production needs to continue running smoothly.



**\$30–50k**

is the average cost per incident due to halted lines from packaging malfunctions

**15–25%**

reduced output per hour from downtime caused by inefficient automation

**74%**

of consumers associate poor packaging quality with lower product quality, potentially affecting repeat purchases

## Make your product stand out with Print-On-Tray capability

Our in-house printing allows you to eliminate steps in your process and deliver a product that makes a lasting impression. How? Print nutritional labels, brand details and QR codes directly onto your paper trays.



## Worried that switching to paper trays will slow your line or compromise product quality?

The truth is that with the right supplier, you can make the switch without suffering through the jams, misfills, poor seals and other challenges that could disrupt production.

## FRESHTRAYS are engineered to proactively address these problems.

**Seamless integration with processing lines.** Designed to perform in high-speed overwrap machines, vacuum skin packaging (VSP) machines and manual handling, our sustainable FRESHTRAYS trays hold their form without collapsing or losing structure. This saves processors from costly slowdowns, rewrops and product damage.

## Protect your product and brand with strong paper trays.

Featuring enhanced moisture resistance and barrier coatings, our paper trays are designed to withstand rigorous handling. This prevents cracking and deformation, and reduces the risk of accidental breakage and product damage. Reinforced pressed paperboard lowers breakage by up to 60% compared to EPS or thin plastic trays.

**Trays shaped to fit your protein.** Available in multiple sizes and depths (3P, 4P, 8P & VSP), our FRESHTRAYS can meet the shape requirements to fit your protein. Whether it's thick chicken breasts or thinly sliced strip steaks, you get the right sustainable tray to present and protect your protein.

# Your supplier should help you move faster.

## Global supply chains are unpredictable.

Packaging delays can stall production, disappoint customers and cost you business. That's why having a U.S.-based supplier isn't just convenient — it's essential.

## How does a domestic supplier help?

- 🌿 **Reliable supply** without overseas delays
- 🌿 **No tariffs or hidden costs**
- 🌿 **Lower carbon footprint, higher sustainability**
- 🌿 **Strict quality standards you can trust**
- 🌿 **Supports American jobs and communities**

## Small enough to care. Big enough to deliver.

If a supplier is too small, they might not have the manufacturing muscle to handle your order. But if a supplier is too big, you might get slow responses and an impersonal customer experience.

## The right supplier is one with:

- 🌿 **Flexibility and responsiveness to prioritize your needs**
- 🌿 **Customer-centric experts who can solve your problems**
- 🌿 **Manufacturing capabilities that can deliver at scale**

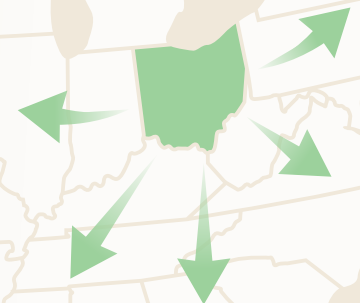
## U.S. fresh protein market projected growth:

**\$23 billion** in 2025 to **\$31 billion** by 2030 (CAGR of 4.3%)

## From our 150,000 sq. ft. facility in Ohio, we combine agility with scalable production to give you:

- 🌿 **Proximity:** Reduced shipping delays and costs
- 🌿 **Capacity:** State-of-the-art equipment plus ongoing investments to increase output
- 🌿 **Speed:** Agility for quick adjustments and on-time orders
- 🌿 **Expertise:** Engineers and specialists dedicated to your packaging process
- 🌿 **Confidence:** Domestic supply shields you from global shipping risks

When production lines are running, waiting weeks for overseas shipments isn't an option. Our U.S. manufacturing and customer-centric philosophy means you get what you need, when you need it.





# Looking to simplify your switch to paper trays?

Let's talk about setting up your packaging process with a sustainable paperboard tray.

Scan the QR code below or visit [papertrays.com](https://papertrays.com), and our team will quickly respond to your message. If you're interested in speaking with an experienced representative, just give us a call at **(419) 423-4030**.



# The right supplier can make big transitions feel simple.

Switching from plastic or foam trays to paper has never been easier or more impactful. Working with a responsive supplier with decades of paperboard experience helps ensure a seamless transition, keeping your production smooth and your brand at its best.

**With PaperTech, you get sustainable paper trays engineered to handle the rigors of your protein processing lines, and you get expert engineers and friendly reps that care about your business.**

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