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Corrugated Industry Delivers Life-cycle Assessment Results

ELK GROVE VILLAGE, IL (October 31, 2010) -- The Corrugated Packaging Alliance (CPA) completed the first-ever U.S. corrugated life cycle assessment and has made results available on its website, www.corrugated.org.

The LCA study evaluated the performance of a 1-kilogram U.S. industry-average corrugated product throughout its entire life cycle, “cradle-to-cradle”. It was conducted according to the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) 14040/44 standards by Five Winds International and PE Americas and included the review of an expert panel.

The aim of the study was to generate high-quality, timely data on the environmental impacts of corrugated packaging. Findings are intended to help producers and users understand the environmental impact of corrugated products including Global Warming Potential (GWP); Acidification Potential (AP) (acid rain); Eutrophication Potential (EP) (one impact on the ability of water to support aquatic life); and Smog Creation Potential along with Primary Energy Demand (PE).

There were three key findings from the study.

- **Like most manufacturing industries, the raw material manufacturing drives impacts.** However, the CPA noted that containerboard mills have significantly reduced their emissions/ impact over time. For example, over 65 percent of the average containerboard mill’s energy use comes from

biomass, a renewable energy feedstock, the combustion of which does not contribute to global warming emissions.

- **Transportation has little impact.** Long-distance transportation scenarios (based on national averages) were modeled, yet still represented a minor influence on overall life-cycle impacts for all impact categories.
- **End-of-Life impacts Global Warming Potential.** The study indicates that End-of-Life as modeled, based on 2006 industry data, can impact global warming potential. Corrugated products are currently the single most recycled packaging material. In 2006, 78 percent of U.S. shipments of corrugated were recovered for recycling. Today, that number has grown to 81.2 percent with almost all of that material being recycled into new products. In addition, the average corrugated product contains 46 percent recycled content. These high recovery rates mean less material goes to landfills, which results in fewer greenhouse gas emissions from their disposal.

“We are proud of our first Life Cycle Assessment of the corrugated industry,” said Dwight Schmidt, CPA’s executive director. “We recognized from the very start the importance of total transparency and stakeholder involvement, so we continued an active dialogue with the review panel throughout the process. I want to thank the panel and our members for the countless hours expended during this study and for their dedication to environmental improvement both at their companies and at the industry level.”

Results of the study will be used to populate the U.S. Life Cycle Inventory (USLCI) Database, the EPA WARM model and the Sustainable Packaging Coalition’s Compass tool. In addition, the study can be used as a benchmarking tool to track overall industry improvements and for individual member companies



to conduct their own LCA studies. It can also be used as a baseline for future industry studies.

The Life Cycle Report can be found at www.corrugated.org, along with explanatory materials such as frequently-asked questions (FAQ).

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The Corrugated Packaging Alliance (CPA, www.corrugated.org) is a joint effort among the American Forest & Paper Association (AF&PA, www.afandpa.org), Association of Independent Corrugated Converters (AICC, www.aiccbox.org), and Fibre Box Association (FBA, www.fibrebox.org). Its purpose is to address corrugated material and industry issues, covering containerboard manufacturing through box converting operations, by providing factual information with a coordinated industry focus that effectively acts on industry matters that cannot be addressed by individual members alone.