



Reusable Packaging Systems in Nelson- Tasman

What's happening today, what's possible tomorrow?

Report commissioned by Nelson City Council
and Tasman District Council

AUGUST 2022

WHO WE ARE

Reuse Aotearoa is an organisation dedicated to building the momentum and capability to scale reusable packaging systems in New Zealand. We focus on understanding and telling the story of reuse, and fostering collaboration to bring reusable packaging systems to life and grow their strength and presence across the motu.

The story of this report

In 2022, Nelson City Council and Tasman District Council commissioned Reuse Aotearoa to provide a qualitative overview of the **current scope and future potential of reusable packaging for food, beverage and other household goods in the Nelson-Tasman region**. The aim of the study is to help inform future waste minimisation planning for the region and to outline practical opportunities and recommendations to grow the uptake of reusable packaging in Nelson-Tasman.

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Disclaimer: Inclusion of images from various businesses does not indicate those businesses endorse the contents of this document.

Cover image: Pic's Peanut Butter Perfit jar swap system (image supplied)


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ChiaSisters
supporting
Māhuka Steiner School




**PRESSED
PEAR
JUICE**

Nutritional Information per 100ml	
Energy	45 kJ
Total Fat	0g
Total Carbohydrate	10g
Protein	0g
Sodium	0mg

ChiaSisters is a social enterprise that supports Māhuka Steiner School. We produce fresh pressed pear juice from local pears. The juice is made in a clean, hygienic environment and is packed in reusable kegs. We are proud to be a part of the local food and drink community.

ChiaSisters
www.chiasisters.co.nz
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Made in New Zealand



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Chia Sisters
Fresh Pressed Pear
Batch

Executive summary

The opportunity to purchase everyday household products in reusable or refillable packaging is relatively normalised and available in Nelson-Tasman. Furthermore, there is a community of willing businesses who could be supported to establish, sustain or further expand their reusable packaging offerings.

This is a good news story waiting to be told, and an ongoing opportunity to be harnessed to advance Nelson-Tasman's transition to a low-carbon, circular economy.

For this research, we conducted desktop research and interviews with 12 local businesses and stakeholders during May - July 2022. We found that Nelson-Tasman has many producers and retailers who operate reusable packaging systems for products like groceries and prepared food and drink. These systems operate both business-to-business (B2B) and business-to-consumer (B2C). Some examples include widespread use of kegs, bulk bins, and swap systems for glass bottles, jars and reusable takeaway cups. The current base level of activity provides an ideal platform to further grow the presence and impact of reuse in the region.

Data gaps make it hard to quantify the level and impact of reuse in the region. Most businesses operating reusable packaging systems in Nelson-Tasman do not use reusable packaging exclusively, or even as their primary packaging choice. More commonly, a smaller percentage of the total product made or retailed is offered in reusable packaging. However, **there are businesses in who sell the majority of the products they make or retail through reusable packaging systems.** For example, Oaklands Milk,

many breweries in the region, and grocery stores that rely on bulk bins. There are also businesses in the Nelson-Tasman region whose primary purpose is to operate a reusable packaging system, such as **CupCycling with Swappa App, Associated Bottlers Co Swappa Crate, and CHEP.**

Interviewees shared a consistent set of motivating factors and barriers to establishing, sustaining and growing reusable packaging. These reflect what we have heard in other parts of the country, and the findings in the reusable packaging literature. The Nelson-Tasman businesses we spoke to are highly motivated to implement reuse, for reasons that include, but also go beyond, sustainability. However, various barriers make it hard even for willing players to establish and grow reuse systems. These barriers also obstruct businesses' ability to sustain operational reuse systems; in some cases, we found a risk of backslide towards single-use amongst businesses offering reusable packaging, due to inadequate consumer demand and the high costs of running reusable packaging systems in an economic system geared for single-use.

Nevertheless, a wide range of strategic and practical opportunities exist to tap into the enthusiasm for reuse in the region and overcome some of the identified barriers. **All 12 interviewees were interested in initiating or expanding their reusable packaging offering for the businesses they represent.** Some have proactively investigated this for some time. They all had ideas of practical initiatives that could be trialled and most recognised the social and environmental benefits that would come from collaborating. The high levels of interest in reusable packaging systems is



IDEAL CUP: IMAGE SUPPLIED BY NELSON CITY COUNCIL

an opportunity that Council and industry groups can leverage through targeted advocacy and investment, promotional support, the brokerage of collaboration and reuse trials, and through embedding reuse into wider initiatives like the Food and Beverage Tourism Strategy and waste minimisation planning.

Overall, reusable packaging has the potential to become part of Nelson-Tasman's unique brand and identity—demonstrating the region's commitment to sustainability and to reducing waste and plastic pollution. Nelson-Tasman is home to businesses who are national leaders in reusable packaging, with expertise that will be sought after as New Zealand seeks to embed more circular packaging models. Already, the comparative strength of reusable packaging systems in the Nelson-Tasman region is a **good news story that could be better told within the local business community, to the region's residents, to tourists, to other territorial authorities, to central government, and to the wider New Zealand public.** Furthermore, the businesses who currently operate reusable packaging systems could be rewarded with greater recognition and direct support for their efforts, which further the region's waste reduction and climate goals and enable Nelson-Tasman to stand out as a leading incubator of circular lifestyles and business models.

To these ends, we have made the following recommendations, targeted to different stakeholders in the Nelson-Tasman region:

Opportunities for local government

1. Consider how the review of the Joint Waste Management and Minimisation Plan can support reusable packaging.
2. Adopt procurement and investment policies that favour reusable packaging.
3. Support reuse trials, including collaborative efforts and industry peer support.
4. Include reusable packaging in council waste minimisation communications to residents and businesses.
5. Advocate for reusable packaging amongst local government and to central government.
6. Support industry and community to address infrastructure and logistics gaps.

Opportunities for businesses and industry groups

1. **Suppliers and producers:** offer reuse and refill whenever you can.
2. **Hospitality, tourism and accommodation:** be a customer for products in reusables and collaborate to de-risk the phase-out of single-use.
3. **Retailers:** actively encourage and facilitate reusables with your suppliers and your customers.
4. **Couriers/postal service:** help to get reusable packaging from A to B.
5. **Collective action across businesses and industry:** work together to fill infrastructure/service gaps and advocate for pro-reuse policies.

1. ABOUT THIS REPORT

In 2022, Nelson City Council and Tasman District Council commissioned Reuse Aotearoa to provide a qualitative overview of the **current scope and future potential of reusable packaging for food, beverage and other household goods in the Nelson-Tasman region**. The study will help to inform future waste minimisation planning for the region, and is part of supporting a culture of reuse. The result is this report that combines insights from desktop research, a literature review, and one-on-one interviews with local Nelson-Tasman businesses/ stakeholders who provide reusable packaging to:

- Paint a picture of some of the current reusable packaging activity in Nelson-Tasman.
- Outline the opportunities for scaling and expanding existing reusable packaging activity, and aligning with initiatives like the regional food and beverage tourism strategy and future waste minimisation planning.
- Recommend actions to increase reusable packaging activity.

1.1 | Report scope

Reusable packaging systems can be used across all areas of economic activity. This report focuses on **consumer-facing reusable packaging systems for food, beverage, takeaways, personal care products and cleaning products**. The types of businesses considered include producers, retailers (especially in the groceries sector), reusable packaging providers, and hospitality, tourism and accommodation providers. The scope is based on the assumption that the use of reusable packaging for these products and in these sectors directly reduces the quantity of kerbside rubbish and recycling. This is important for Councils because collecting and managing rubbish and recycling is a focal point of local government waste activity, investment and Waste Management and Minimisation Plans.

1.2 | Methodology

This report combines findings from desktop research and one-on-one interviews with a range of businesses in Nelson-Tasman conducted during May - July 2022. We undertook a desktop scan to identify the in-scope reusable packaging systems across the region. This involved search engine searches, word-of-mouth, and pre-existing knowledge within our research team¹. Having compiled this list, we created a representative shortlist of businesses that we wished to interview. **We completed 12 interviews with businesses and other stakeholders in the groceries and hospitality sectors**. Some of the interviewees represented more than one brand or business.

We analysed the interview content with reference to the literature on reusable packaging, which we recently traversed in our report *Reusable Packaging in Aotearoa*². We sought to:



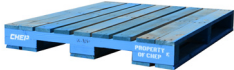
- list and describe the current reusable packaging systems in Nelson-Tasman;
- outline what interviewees felt were the benefits and barriers associated with operating these systems;
- identify opportunities for the region to grow the uptake and scale of reusable packaging; and
- make specific recommendations for different stakeholders.

Throughout the report we mention businesses and offer case studies of different reuse activity in the region. We wish to emphasise that our desktop study of reusable packaging systems in the region traversed a range of materials already in the public domain. Therefore, **not every business mentioned or featured in this report was interviewed**.

1.3 | What are reusable packaging systems?

Reusable packaging systems can be arranged into the three main categories outlined in **Table 1**. These systems can operate between businesses (B2B) or between

Table 1: The Different Types of Reusable Packaging

Reusable Packaging System	How it works	Examples
<p>Returnable packaging</p> 	<p>The product is packaged into packaging that the customer returns when empty to be washed, sanitised and refilled with the same product or product type.</p> <p><i>NB: Returnable packaging can be B2B or B2C.</i></p>	<p>Bottle swap systems, like Swappa Crate for beer or glass bottle milk swap systems like Oaklands Milk.</p> <p>Kegs (B2B), e.g. for beer, wine or milk.</p> <p>Glass jar swap systems for food (e.g. Pic’s Peanut Butter 1KG glass jar Perfit swap system) or for personal care products, such as Carol Priest’s reusable glass containers for their skincare range.</p> <p>Reusable takeaway packaging systems, like CupCycling with Swappa App or Again Again.</p>
<p>Refill by bulk dispenser</p> 	<p>Unpackaged ‘loose’ product is sold from bulk dispensers. Customers fill their own containers (or purchase a new, empty container the first time they use the dispenser that they can bring back for refill for future purchases).</p> <p>Purchasing from a bulk dispenser is usually a B2C model, but the category can include B2B returnable packaging if retailers return the empty bulk dispensers to the original supplier for refill, e.g. kegs.</p>	<p>Loose produce at the supermarket.</p> <p>Bulk bins for dry goods, as seen at Bin Inn or zero waste grocers like GoodFor</p> <p>Liquid cleaning product and toiletries refill stations, e.g. ecostore or Littlefoot.</p> <p>Milk vending machines, e.g. Oaklands Milk.</p> <p>Rigger fill stations at breweries, e.g. Eddyline or Bays Brewery.</p>
<p>Transit Packaging</p> 	<p>Reusable packaging for transporting or shipping perishables or non-perishables, e-commerce deliveries, or moving products from producer to warehouse to retail store etc. Most commonly B2B, but can be B2C, e.g. reusable courier bags for e-commerce.</p>	<p>Reusable boxes, containers, soft packages, crates, pallets, wraps, e.g. CHEP and Palletite.</p>

businesses and consumers (B2C), or both.

For a more detailed definition of reusable packaging systems, why they are important, and the qualities of a best-practice system, see the Reuse Aotearoa mini-report “What is reusable packaging and why is it important?” in **Appendix 1**.

2. SETTING THE SCENE: REUSABLE PACKAGING SYSTEMS IN NELSON-TASMAN

Nelson-Tasman is known for its stunning landscapes and national parks, hops and horticulture, and sunshine and laid-back lifestyle. Our research suggests it should also be known for the success and spread of its reusable packaging systems. Across the region, a resident or visitor has a wide array of opportunities to encounter and engage with reusable packaging systems, some of which are 'best in class' for the country. This is a good news story waiting to be told. At present, the reusable packaging efforts of local Nelson-Tasman businesses largely fly under the radar, rather than being showcased or celebrated. Therefore, their success stems from the engagement and support they receive from a segment of local residents who choose to be their customers.

This section of the report provides an index of reusable packaging initiatives across the Nelson-Tasman region, grouped by producers and retailers, along with snapshot case studies. For the hospitality, tourism and accommodation sectors, we have explained how reusable packaging systems can work in these sectors and highlighted examples in Nelson-Tasman as case studies, rather than a full index.

As this study focuses on packaging for common household consumables, we mostly focus on returnable packaging and refill by bulk dispenser models, though we note that B2B reusable transit packaging activity occurs in the region due to the presence of operators such as **CHEP**³. Reuse systems at events were also outside the scope of this report, but we acknowledge the event-based reusable serveware systems and infrastructure developed and implemented by **Waste No More - Nelson Whakatū**, which has fostered the visibility of reuse in the region, and validated the use of Council grants to help establish innovative reuse models.

2.1 | Producers operating reusable packaging systems

Producers are essential for initiating reusable packaging systems for their products. In the Nelson-Tasman region, numerous producers of food, beverage and personal care and cleaning products operate reusable packaging systems, which reflect the different types of reusable packaging outlined in **Table 1** above.

Many producers operate these systems with both household customers and commercial operators in the retail, hospitality, tourism and accommodation sectors, which enables the latter to participate in driving reuse too.

Producers may choose to package their products into consumer-facing reusable packaging that is:

- **returnable**, e.g. glass bottles or jars that the producer takes back, sanitises and reuses; or
- **refillable**, e.g. bulk dispensers that allow a product to be sold loose/'on tap' and consumers can bring their own containers to fill.

They may sell directly to the consumer (e.g. through a factory shop or home delivery) or via a retailer (e.g. a grocery store). If they sell the product through a retailer, ideally the producer agrees to take back bulk dispensers for sanitising and refilling, and/or the retailer agrees to act as a drop-off point for customers' empty returnable packaging.

Producers may also use reusable packaging to vend their product to commercial customers for use in their commercial operations (e.g. hospitality outlets). In this case, they operate returnable packaging systems that move between them and the business. For example, supplying hospitality outlets with product in packages that the producer takes back, sanitises and refills, like bottle swaps or kegs.

Virtually all the reusable packaging systems used by Nelson-Tasman producers are bespoke/vertically-integrated systems, meaning that they are run by the producers themselves and incorporated into their business model, alongside the manufacture of the product. There are very few third-party reusable packaging systems. The main exception is the **Associated Bottlers Co Swappa Crate** system, which operates nationally and is used by DB and Lion Brewery.

SNAPSHOT

Breweries and kegs

As the home of hops and orchards, the Nelson-Tasman region sports a range of breweries and cideries, all of whom package a proportion of their beer/cider into returnable kegs. When a product is kegged, it can be dispensed on tap to the final consumer without the need for more packaging, and the keg itself is reusable. By volume, kegging is often the primary means of packaging for breweries. For example, one brewery interviewee told us they package ~60% of their beer into kegs.

In Nelson-Tasman, some kegged beer is sold on tap at the brewery cellar door and customers can BYO bottles to fill. However, most kegs are sent to hospitality outlets both within and beyond the region for on-license beer/cider taps. Some kegs go to off-licence retailers that host taps for customers to BYO bottles, such as the **Liquor King** on Hardy Street. Producers might own the fleet of kegs that they send out to commercial customers, or they might rent kegs from third parties, like **Kegstar**. It is normal practice in the brewing industry for breweries to operate washing and filling equipment for kegs, even if they only rent the kegs.



Personal care products

Carol Priest is a Nelson-Tasman-based skincare producer established in 1988. The majority of the business' skincare range (48 different formulations) is packaged into glass jars and bottles. Both household and commercial customers can return these glass containers to the factory store (formerly in Motueka, but recently moved to Nelson City), or to local stockists that act as a return point for these empty containers. The company has a commercial dishwasher to sanitise the containers, which are then refilled. All customers are rewarded for returning empty packaging with a discount off their next purchase. For customers further afield, Carol Priest sends a prepaid envelope for customers to return the containers.

Carol Priest has recently relocated their factory to Nelson City and will have an attached shop front. They anticipate that a brick and mortar store will greatly lift engagement with their reuse programme by making it easier for local customers to return empty containers. The company has plans to increase their communications and marketing around their reusable packaging programme. In their new shop, they are also considering vending some of their liquid products—e.g. shampoos, conditioners and body lotions—through a refill by bulk dispenser model

“To be competitive, we absolutely have to go the way of reuse and refilling – it’s almost an expectation from customers. We don’t see the trend of reusing going away – it will grow, especially as we proactively market it and make it more accessible.”

–Carol Priest, 2022

Food Producers

Most of the food that Nelson-Tasman residents can access via reusable packaging systems is mediated by grocers who operate refill by bulk dispenser systems like bulk bins (see the retailers section below). However, several food producers are initiating or participating in reusable packaging systems for their products.

For example, since 2013, **Pic’s Peanut Butter** has operated a returnable glass jar system for 1KG purchases of peanut butter that is available in Nelson-Tasman, exclusively. Consumers can buy these 1KG “Perfit” jars from the Pic’s factory store in Stoke, from the Pic’s stall at the Nelson Saturday Market, or from select retail stockists who also act as a drop-off point for returns of empty jars, e.g. **Prego Mediterranean Foods** in Nelson City or **Connings Food Market** in Tasman. Consumers are incentivised to return the Perfit jars with a \$5 discount on their next 1KG jar purchase. Returned jars are sanitised and refilled by Pic’s.

Other food producers are facilitating refill models for their products in a variety of ways. For example, **Goulter’s Vinegar** in Tahunanui allow locals to visit their factory with BYO containers (of any size) to fill up with product straight from the source. In addition, Goulter’s also package roughly 30% of their vinegar production into 20L returnable plastic jerry cans that they sell to individuals and commercial customers across New Zealand, including retailers who sell the vinegar in their stores “on tap”. Goulter’s actively encourages their customers to return these empty 20L containers for refill. A repeat purchase of a refilled 20L container of vinegar is considerably cheaper for the customer than purchasing a new 20L bulk container of vinegar (even after factoring in the courier costs to return the container to Goulter’s).

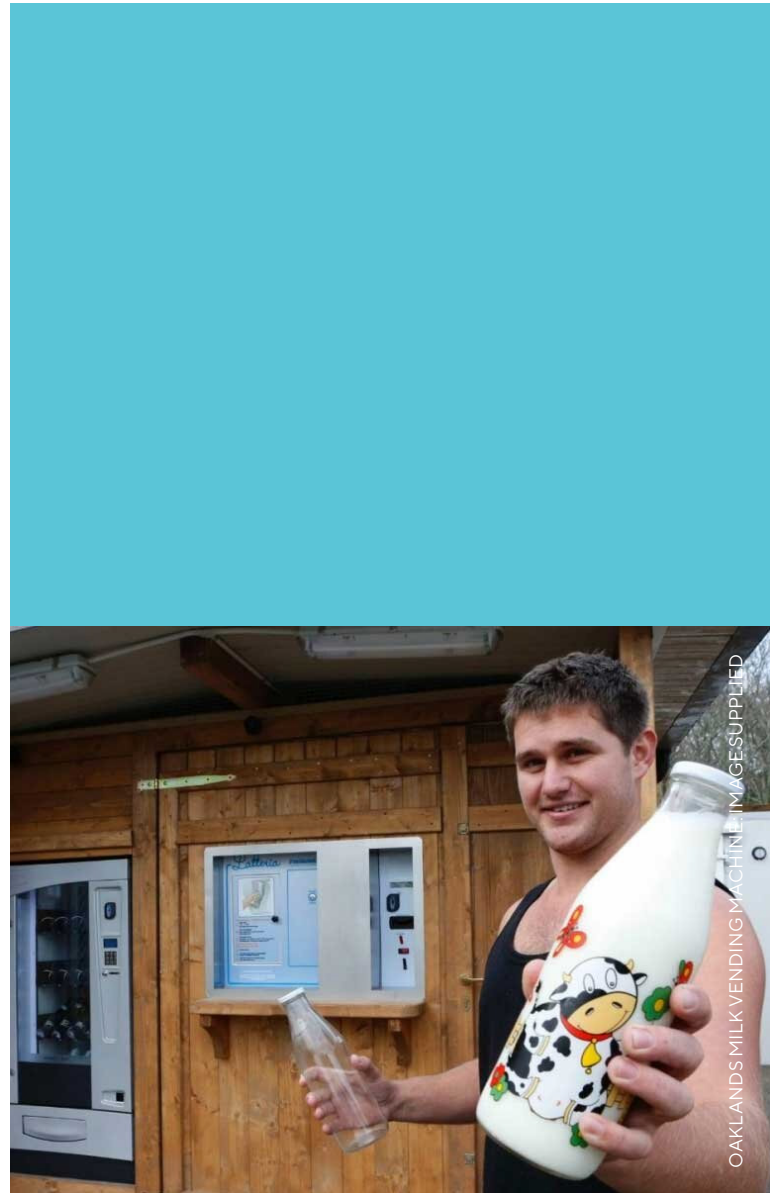
Milk

In terms of scale and longevity, **Oaklands Milk** operates the preeminent example of reusable packaging in Nelson-Tasman. Oaklands sell about 2–3 million litres of milk each year, mostly in the Nelson-Tasman region, using a range of reusable packaging systems that they have operated since 2013, including:

- **1L returnable glass bottles**, delivered to roughly **3,700 households** and **150 cafes and restaurants** in the region, and stocked by roughly **11 retailers** who also act as drop-off points for empty bottles⁴. All returned glass bottles are sanitised and refilled by Oaklands at their washing facility.
- **Five milk vending machines** (4 in Nelson and 1 in Tasman), where customers can bring a bottle to refill with milk (fresh empty bottles can be bought at the vending machine by customers who do not have a bottle already). The vending machines hold **250L stainless steel canisters** that Oaklands refill several times a week.

Oaklands also plans to implement a returnable milk keg system for their café and restaurant customers. This would involve installing milk taps into these outlets, so Oaklands could then deliver returnable kegs of milk that they sanitise and refill, rather than individual bottles.

The reusable packaging system that Oaklands Milk operates currently provides **35 full-time equivalent jobs** for locals, which includes delivery/collection of full and empty containers, washing, and bottling/filling. As these jobs service a reusable packaging system, they can be considered jobs in the circular economy.



PRODUCERS OVERVIEW

Table 2 lists the producers operating reusable packaging systems in the Nelson-Tasman region that we uncovered during our desktop research. The list is unlikely to be exhaustive; it paints an initial picture of the baseline level of reuse activity occurring.

Key for reusable packaging descriptors

Descriptor	Description
Returnable packaging (Direct B2C)	Reusable packaging intended for consumers to take home and return, vended direct to individual household consumers (e.g. by home delivery or factory shop).
Returnable packaging (B2C via third party)	Reusable packaging intended for consumers to take home and return, vended to individual household consumers via a third party like a retailer.
Refill by bulk dispenser (B2C)	Product vended directly to individual household consumers through an in-house fill your own system at factory/brewery.
Returnable packaging (B2B)	Product sold to commercial customers via returnable packaging that moves between the producer and the commercial customer. This scenario includes bottle swap systems between producers and hospitality outlets, or arrangements where producers take back bulk dispensers used for consumer-facing refillables in grocery stores.

B2C = Business-to-consumer; B2B = Business-to-business

Table 2: Producers operating reusable packaging systems in Nelson-Tasman

Food			
Name	Location	Product type	Reusable packaging system
Goulter's Vinegar	Nelson	Vinegar	Returnable packaging (B2B) - 20L plastic jerry cans Returnable packaging (Direct B2C) - 20L plastic jerry cans Refill by bulk dispenser - in-house fill your own
Mountain Valley	Nelson	Honey	Returnable packaging (B2B)
Pic's Peanut Butter	Nelson	Peanut Butter	Returnable packaging (Direct B2C) - 1kg glass jar swap Returnable packaging (B2C via third party) - 1kg glass jar swap
Tasman Ridge	Tasman	Olive oil	Returnable packaging (B2B) - metal cans
The Vegetarian Butcher	Nelson	Vegetarian meat	Refill by bulk dispenser (B2C) - in-house fill your own
Three Groves	Nelson	Olive Oil	Returnable packaging (B2B) - metal cans
Yum Granola	Nelson	Muesli/cereals	Returnable packaging (Direct B2C) - customer BYO packaging dropped off in honesty box Returnable packaging (B2B) - plastic pails
Cleaning and personal care products			
Name	Location	Product type	Reusable packaging system
Carol Priest	Nelson	Skincare	Returnable packaging (B2B) - glass jars
Global Soap	Nelson	Soap bars	Refill by bulk dispenser (B2C) - unpackaged soap bars in factory shop

Table 2: Producers operating reusable packaging systems in Nelson-Tasman (continued)

Beverages			
Name	Location	Product type	Reusable packaging system
Bays Brewery	Nelson	Beers	Returnable packaging (B2B) – kegs Refill by bulk dispenser (B2C) – in-house fill your own
Celcius Coffee	Tasman	Fresh coffee	Refill by bulk dispenser (B2C) – in-house fill your own
Chia Sisters	Nelson	Juice	Returnable packaging (B2B) – kegs
Eddyline	Tasman	Beer	Returnable packaging (B2B) – kegs Refill by bulk dispenser (B2C) – in-house fill your own
Golden Bear Brewing	Tasman	Beer, Non-alcoholic (e.g. ginger beer, lemonade)	Returnable packaging (B2B) – kegs Refill by bulk dispenser (B2C)
Heke Homemade Herbals	Nelson	Tea	Returnable packaging (B2B)
Hop Federation	Tasman	Beer	Returnable packaging (B2B) – kegs Refill by bulk dispenser (B2C) – in-house fill your own
Kush	Nelson	Fresh coffee	Refill by bulk dispenser (B2C) – in-house fill your own
Mussel Inn	Tasman	Beer	Returnable packaging (B2B) – kegs Refill by bulk dispenser (B2C) – in-house fill your own
Oaklands Milk	Nelson	Milk and cream	Returnable packaging (Direct B2C) – glass bottle swap home delivery Returnable packaging (B2C via third party) – glass bottle swap in retailers Refill by bulk dispenser (B2C) – vending machines
Park Life Brewing Co	Nelson	Beer	Returnable packaging (B2B) – kegs Refill by bulk dispenser (B2C) – in-house fill your own
Peckham’s Cider	Tasman	Cider	Returnable packaging (B2B) – kegs
Pomeroy’s Coffee and Tea	Nelson and Tasman	Fresh coffee and tea	Refill by bulk dispenser (B2C) – in-house fill your own
Rabbit Island Coffee Co	Tasman	Fresh coffee	Refill by bulk dispenser (B2C) – in-house fill your own
Raglan Roast	Nelson	Fresh coffee	Refill by bulk dispenser (B2C) – in-house fill your own
Riverside Milk	Tasman	Raw milk	Refill by bulk dispenser (B2C) – vending machine
Sprig & Fern	Nelson and Tasman (7 locations)	Beer	Returnable packaging (B2B) – kegs Refill by bulk dispenser (B2C) – in-house fill your own
Sublime Coffee Roasters	Nelson	Fresh coffee	Refill by bulk dispenser (B2C) – in-house fill your own
The Grind Coffee Roasters	Tasman	Fresh Coffee	Refill by bulk dispenser (B2C) – in-house fill your own
TLC	Tasman	Fresh coffee	Refill by bulk dispenser (B2C) – in-house fill your own
Toad Hall	Tasman	Fresh coffee	Returnable packaging (B2B) – kegs Refill by bulk dispenser (B2C) – in-house fill your own
Unkel	Tasman	Wine	Returnable packaging B2B – kegs
Village Milk	Tasman	Raw milk	Refill by bulk dispenser (B2C) – vending machine
Wholemeal Café	Tasman	Coffee	Refill by bulk dispenser (B2C) – in-house fill your own



2.2 | Retailers operating reusable packaging systems

Retailers, such as grocery stores, sit between consumers and producers and are critical for bringing reusable packaging into the lives of everyday people. They are also an essential partner for producers who want to run a reusable packaging system because retailer cooperation is usually required for producers to implement reusable packaging systems at any significant scale.

The retailers we have focused on for the study's targeted products (food, beverages and personal care and cleaning products) are **grocery stores and liquor/off-license stores**.

As with producers, retailers in Nelson-Tasman might operate a reusable packaging system in various ways. For example:

- Choosing to stock products in B2C returnable packaging and acting as a drop-off point for returns, e.g. acting as an Oaklands Milk stockist.
- Operating consumer-facing refill by bulk dispenser systems where fresh, dry and liquid products are sold loose (e.g. at a bulk bin or produce aisle, or over a deli counter), or on tap, and encouraging customers to bring their own containers.
- Choosing to send the bulk packaging used to fill in-store bulk dispensers back to suppliers for washing and refill, e.g. returnable kegs in liquor stores.



BACKING THE BULK BIN FOR EVERYDAY GROCERIES

Nelson-Tasman has a wide range of grocers (independent from supermarkets) that have chosen the bulk dispenser model as their **primary packaging system**, with customers being encouraged to bring their own bags and containers to fill. These stores and coops vend a range of dry foods through bulk bin and scoop systems or gravity feeders; liquid products on tap, such as beverages, oils, vinegars and condiments; and cleaning products and toiletries on tap or through bulk bins. These stores, which are fairly well spread across the region, are:

- GoodFor, a dedicated zero waste grocer or packaging-free store in Appleby
- Bin Inn Nelson
- Bin Inn Richmond
- BeetRoot Groceries in Motueka
- Organic Foods Nelson
- Golden Bay Organics in Takaka
- Two organic food coops – one in Nelson City and one at Riverside in Tasman – we have included these as ‘retailers’ although the coop model is not a commercial model.

Where possible, retailers may work with their suppliers to take back bulk dispensers for sanitisation and refill. This works best when suppliers are local. For example, most of the grocers listed above stock olive oil and vinegars that are produced in the region and return the empty dispensing canisters to the suppliers for refill. In some cases, retailers operate returnable B2B packaging systems with suppliers further afield. For example, several retailers stock toiletries and cleaning products on tap by **Littlefoot**, a company based in Palmerston North that operates a national return and refill programme for all its bulk dispenser packaging⁵.

Ideally, with a bulk dispenser model, customers would have the option of borrowing reusable containers to fill if they forget to bring their own. In the Nelson-Tasman region, **Organic Foods Nelson** provides upcycled containers for cleaning product and toiletries refills, and the **Organic Food Coop** in Nelson accepts upcycled jar donations that coop members can choose to use to refill if they forget their own. **GoodFor** and the **Bin Inns** also stock new glass jars and bottles that customers can purchase for refilling – the price of buying these potentially incentivises reuse of the containers for future shopping trips. Most of the stores also actively encourage customers to bring their own containers for refilling. For example, the Bin Inns offer a 5% discount for customers that BYO. Other stores have signage encouraging customers to bring their own containers.

“We encourage people to bring their own containers and bottles... I suggest that they start with bags they have already, like old ziplock bags – some are quite hardy and can last a long time. And they are easy to carry around.”

–Retailer interviewee, 2022

BeetRoot Groceries is a groceries retailer in Motueka. The store has about **250-260 bulk bins, 25 products on tap**, and about **20 jars for products like teas**. They also operate some B2B returnable packaging systems to fill these dispensers (e.g. olive oil and apple cider vinegar bulk dispensers are returned to suppliers for refill) and some B2C returnable packaging systems (e.g. milk bottles and egg cartons). About 60% of the product BeetRoot Groceries stocks is in bulk bins, with roughly 80% of total sales coming from bulk bin purchases. About 10% of customers reliably bring their own containers for refilling most of the time, with half of this cohort (i.e. 5%) using their own containers 100% of the time.

RETAILERS OVERVIEW

Table 3 provides an (non-exhaustive) index of retailers who are operating reusable packaging systems in the region. We have created a key to explain the different reusable packaging system descriptors used in the table.

Key for reusable packaging descriptors

Descriptor	Description
Refill by bulk dispenser (B2C)	Retailers who operate consumer-facing refill by bulk dispenser systems.
Refill by bulk dispenser (B2C) from returnable kegs/cans/ packaging (B2B)	Consumer-facing refill by bulk dispenser systems that are themselves returnable to the supplier for refill.
Refill by bulk dispenser (B2C) – BYO containers OK at deli counter	Retailers with deli counters who accept BYO containers.
Stockist B2C Returnable Packaging	Retailers who stock consumer-facing returnable packaging on behalf of a producer, and act as a return point for that package.

B2C = Business-to-consumer; B2B = Business-to-business

Table 3: Retailers operating reusable packaging systems in Nelson-Tasman

Grocery and liquor			
Name	Location	Product type	Reusable packaging system
Arden/Porta Via	Nelson	Restaurant with wine off-licence	Refill by bulk dispenser (B2C) from returnable kegs – wine
BeetRoot Groceries	Tasman	Grocer/ wholefood retailer	Refill by bulk dispenser (B2C) – bulk bins and liquid food, cleaners and toiletries sold on tap – some via returnable packaging (B2B) Stockist B2C Returnable Packaging – milk and eggs
Benge & Co Green Grocers	Nelson and Tasman	Grocer	Refill by bulk dispenser (B2C) from returnable cans (B2B) – olive oil. Stockist B2C Returnable Packaging – milk
Bin Inn Nelson	Nelson	Grocer/ wholefood retailer	Refill by bulk dispenser (B2C) – bulk bins and liquid food, cleaners and toiletries sold on tap – some via returnable packaging B2B Stockist B2C Returnable Packaging – milk
Countdown Motueka	Tasman	Supermarket	Refill by bulk dispenser (B2C) – bulk bins
FreshChoice Nelson	Nelson	Supermarket	Refill by bulk dispenser (B2C) – bulk bins
FreshChoice Richmond	Tasman	Supermarket	Refill by bulk dispenser (B2C) – bulk bins
FreshChoice Takaka	Tasman	Supermarket	Refill by bulk dispenser (B2C) – bulk bins
Golden Bay Organics	Tasman	Grocer/ wholefood retailer	Refill by bulk dispenser (B2C) – bulk bins and liquid food, cleaners and toiletries sold on tap – some via returnable packaging (B2B)

Table 3: Retailers operating reusable packaging systems in Nelson-Tasman (continued)

Groceries and liquor			
Name	Location	Product type	Reusable packaging system
Goodfor Wholefoods Refillery	Tasman	Grocer/wholefoods retailer	Refill by bulk dispenser (B2C) – bulk bins and liquid food, cleaners and toiletries sold on tap – some via returnable packaging (B2B) Stockist B2C returnable packaging
Guyton’s	Nelson and Tasman	Seafood/fishmonger	Refill by bulk dispenser (B2C) – BYO containers OK at deli counter
H Hodgsons General Store	Tasman	Grocer	Stockist B2C returnable packaging – milk
Kaiteriteri Recreation Reserve Store	Tasman	Grocer	Stockist B2C returnable packaging – milk
Liquor King Hardy St	Nelson	Liquor store	Refill by bulk dispenser (B2C) from returnable kegs (B2B) – beer/cider
Liquorland Golden Bay	Tasman	Liquor store	Refill by bulk dispenser (B2C) from returnable kegs (B2B) – beer/cider
Liquorland Stoke	Nelson	Liquor store	Refill by bulk dispenser (B2C) from returnable kegs (B2B) – beer/cider
Liquorland Turf	Nelson	Liquor store	Refill by bulk dispenser (B2C) from returnable kegs (B2B) – beer/cider
Mad Butcher	Nelson	Butcher	Refill by bulk dispenser (B2C) – BYO container at deli counter OK
Mapua Village Bakery	Tasman	Bakery	Stockist returnable packaging (B2C) – milk
Milk & More	Nelson	Milk/home delivery	Stockist returnable packaging (B2C) – milk
Murchison Meats	Tasman	Butcher	Refill by bulk dispenser (B2C) –BYO container at deli counter OK
Nelson Organic Co-op	Nelson	Organic wholefoods co-op	Refill by bulk dispenser (B2C) – bulk bins and liquid food, cleaners and toiletries sold on tap – some via returnable packaging (B2B)
New World Motueka	Tasman	Supermarket	Refill by bulk dispenser (B2C) – bulk bins
New World Nelson City	Nelson	Supermarket	Refill by bulk dispenser (B2C) – bulk bins and BYO container at deli counter OK
Organic Foods Nelson	Nelson	Grocer/wholesale retailer	Refill by bulk dispenser (B2C) – bulk bins and liquid food, cleaners and toiletries sold on tap – some via returnable packaging (B2B)
Pak’NSave Richmond Mall	Tasman	Supermarket	Refill by bulk dispenser (B2C) – bulk bins
Pestell’s Rai Bacon Co	Nelson	Butcher	Refill by bulk dispenser (B2C) – BYO containers OK at deli counter
Prego Mediterranean Foods	Nelson	Grocer/specialty food store	Refill by bulk dispenser (B2C) – oils from returnable cans (B2B) and BYO containers OK at deli counter Stockiest B2C Returnable packaging – Pic’s Peanut Butter 1KG glass swap jar
Raeward Fresh	Tasman	Supermarket	Refill by bulk dispenser (B2C) – bulk bins
School Shop	Tasman	Grocer	Stockist returnable packaging (B2C) – milk
Super Liquor Golden Bay	Tasman	Liquor store	Refill by bulk dispenser (B2C) from returnable kegs (B2B) – beer/cider
Tasman Health & Herbs	Tasman	Organics specialty store	Refill by bulk dispenser (B2C) – herbs and teas
The Food Club	Tasman	Organics wholefoods co-op	Refill by bulk dispenser (B2C) – bulk bins and liquid food sold on tap

Table 3: Retailers operating reusable packaging systems in Nelson-Tasman (continued)

Groceries and liquor			
Name	Location	Product type	Reusable packaging system
The Junction	Tasman	Grocer	Stockist B2C Returnable packaging - milk
The Langford Store	Tasman	Grocer	Stockist B2C Returnable packaging - milk
The Moutere Inn	Tasman	Pub	Refill by bulk dispenser (B2C) from returnable kegs (B2B) - beer/cider
The Old Post Office	Tasman	Tasman	Refill by bulk dispenser (B2C) - oils and spices Stockist returnable packaging (B2C) - milk
The Tasman General Store	Tasman	Grocer	Refill by bulk dispenser (B2C) - oil Stockist returnable packaging (B2C) - milk
Toad Hall	Tasman	Grocer/café	Stockist returnable packaging (B2C) - milk



CHEP A BRAMBLES COMPANY. IMAGES SUPPLIED

2.3 | Hospitality, tourism and accommodation operating reusable packaging systems

Hospitality outlets, tourism and accommodation providers use a lot of packaged household-type goods, e.g. food and beverage products. They also pass on packaging to customers through single-use serviceware or single-serve toiletries or condiment packets/sachets.

In the sector, three key activities help to replace this packaging with reusables:

1. Operating reusable serviceware systems as an alternative to single-use takeaway packaging (e.g. takeaway cups, lids and food containers).
2. Buying goods from suppliers who operate reusable packaging systems.
3. Opting to phase-out the use of single-use items or packaged options.

Below are three case studies of each of the above activities. To read more about how these activities operate in the sector nationally, see the Reuse Aotearoa “Sector Snapshot” in **Appendix 2**.



IDEAL CUP: IMAGE SUPPLIED

1. Reusable serviceware systems as an alternative to single-use takeaway packaging

CupCycling with Swappa App: Reusable cup system

CupCycling with Swappa App is a reusable cup system that operates nationally and enables hospitality outlets to serve takeaway hot drinks into reusable cups instead of disposable cups. Launched by IdealCup in Motueka in 2017, CupCycling was originally offered as a deposit-based cup loan system. CupCycling now utilises the Swappa App, which enables customers to borrow cups for free using their smartphone, and for the fleet of reusable cups to be monitored.

Cafes sign up to the system and choose from one of three membership packages. They can choose a ‘pay as you go’ plan, in which the cafe purchases a CupCycling kit (including a fleet of cups), then pays a small transaction charge per cup swapped (\$0.14c per swap). Or, they can choose one of two monthly membership plans, rather than paying a transaction charge. The \$59 per month plan requires the cafe to purchase a CupCycling kit upfront. In the \$79 per month plan, the café receives the CupCycling kit for free.

“Once signed up, a cafe can loan out CupCycling cups to customers wanting a takeaway hot drink. To loan a reusable cup, the customer downloads the Swappa App onto their smartphone and inputs their credit or debit card number. When they borrow a cup, they scan a QR-code unique to the cafe, which registers that they have the cup on loan. They then scan the instore

Swappa QR-code when they return the cup, registering its return. Customers have 14 days to return a cup to **any participating outlet**, otherwise they are charged a \$10 non-return fee to cover the cost of the non-returned cup.

Currently, **11 cafés nationwide** are participating in the new CupCycling with Swappa reusable cup system with about **1,000 reusable cups in circulation**. The system has registered **more than 5,000 cups swapped** since the beginning of November 2021. CupCycling will also be adding reusable food containers to the Swappa platform before the end of 2022. CupCycling is currently working on an implementation strategy to onboard cafes in the Nelson-Tasman region.

.....

2. Buying food from suppliers who operate reusable packaging systems

Kimi Ora: hunting out suppliers who champion reuse

Kimi Ora is an eco-accommodation establishment with a day spa and restaurant, located in Kaiteriteri, Tasman. Kimi Ora is highly proactive about purchasing essential items from suppliers who are willing to operate B2B reusable packaging systems.

Over the years, the staff have followed a systematic process of replacing products that have previously arrived in single-use packaging with alternatives that come in reusables. Kimi Ora has also established systems internally that reduce their use of single-use items. For example, the resort does not provide guests with individually packaged toiletries and have instead installed toiletries dispensers in guest bathrooms that staff refill when servicing the rooms.

Some examples of the reusable packaging systems that Kimi Ora has arranged with suppliers:

- The facial products used in the day spa are from local supplier **Carol Priest** who packages the products into glass jars that they take back when empty, sanitise and refill.

- Toiletries to fill the guestroom bathroom dispensers and all the cleaning products that Kimi Ora uses are sourced from **Littlefoot**, who ship their products to Kimi Ora in bulk packaging that Kimi Ora returns when empty for sanitisation and refill.
- Room sprays for the guestrooms are sourced from **Living Light** candles who send the sprays to Kimi Ora in bulk bottles that they take back when empty for refill.
- For the on-site restaurant, as many kitchen/ food items as possible are sourced from local suppliers that allow Kimi Ora staff to visit their local factory shops with containers to refill. For example, Kimi Ora staff bring jars to **Celsius Coffee** for their fresh coffee beans, they take 10L refillable buckets to **Golden Apiaries** for honey, and get guestroom chocolates from **Aroha Chocolate** in reusable containers.
- Milk is purchased from **Oaklands** in returnable glass bottles.

“We always try and support local businesses – we try and figure out if we can source a product locally and then talk with the business directly and see if they can sort a reusable packaging system out. The companies we have found either make something up for us, or they have something set up already. We find it’s just a matter of talking to them – most have been really keen to find ways of it being reusable.”

–Kimi Ora 2022



3. Opting to phase-out the use of single-use items or packaged options

Saying goodbye to single-use cups: case study

Across Aotearoa, a growing movement of hospitality outlets are phasing-out the use of disposable/single-use hot drink cups and opting only to serve in reusables. This practice normalises a culture of reuse by:

- creating the space for alternative reuse systems to flourish rather than having to compete with freely available disposables

- supporting customers into the habit either of remembering their own reusables or engaging with a reusable cup system.

In the Nelson-Tasman region, four outlets have made the move to go single-use cup free: **Bloom** (Motueka), **Choco Loco** (Takaka), **Mussel Inn** (Onekaka), and **La Planta Café** (Nelson). Two of these outlets – Bloom and La Planta Café – have been single-use-cup-free from the day they started their businesses. All the businesses actively encourage customers to bring their own cups. Choco Loco also set up a mug library for customers who forget to bring their own, while La Planta Café operates the **Again Again** reusable cup scheme⁶.



CHOCO LOCO: IMAGE SUPPLIED



YUM GRANOLA REUSABLE PACKAGING HONESTY BOX: IMAGE SUPPLIED

2.4 | Quantifying the impact of reusable packaging in Nelson-Tasman

Currently, the uptake and availability of reusable packaging systems is reasonably widespread across Nelson-Tasman. More research is needed to measure reusable packaging's regional market share and to quantify the waste these systems avoid within individual businesses and across the region.

Most interviewees operating reusable packaging systems assume their systems reduce waste, but cannot quantify exactly how much. This is understandable given the data needed to conduct these types of assessments is not currently collected systematically in New Zealand, and the tools that would enable businesses to gather this information do not exist or are not widely available.

Our research was able to discern some high level trends and also some insights for individual businesses. Most businesses in the region who operate reusable packaging systems only do so for a percentage of their sales (and usually a smaller percentage compared to what they package into single-use packaging). Very few businesses sell their products in reusable packaging exclusively.

However, there are businesses for whom reusable packaging is the primary packaging choice. For example, **Oaklands Milk** packages the overwhelming majority of their milk production into reusable packaging. Meanwhile, retail outlets who prioritise bulk bins often stock and sell the majority of product via these dispensers, even if they also stock products in single-use packaging.

CALCULATING THE IMPACT OF REUSABLE PACKAGING: OAKLANDS MILK

Who

Oaklands Milk puts about 2-3 million litres of milk onto the market each year, all of which is packaged in reusable packaging - either 250L stainless steel canisters for their vending machines or 1L returnable glass bottles.

Scale and reach

Oaklands supply roughly 150 cafes and restaurants in the region, roughly 3700 households and operate five vending machines (4 of which are in Nelson and 1 of which is in Tasman). The annual domestic consumption of milk in New Zealand is 400 million litres a year⁷. With roughly 2% of the population residing in Nelson-Tasman, a per capita calculation indicates the region consumes about 8 million litres annually. This suggests that **Oaklands holds about 25% of the regional market for milk.**

Waste reduction impact

Oaklands Milk avoids the creation of **1 million 2L plastic bottles per year**. The company's five vending machines alone avoid 225,000 2L plastic milk bottles each year, using only twelve 250L stainless steel canisters. Each of these canisters have already been refilled about **1,500 times** over the course of a decade, and are still in circulation. Oaklands hold a glass bottle float of about 80,000 bottles that are used to vend the remaining 1,550,000L of milk a year⁷. Accordingly, **each year, one bottle will cycle about 19 times**, preventing the creation of about nine 2L plastic milk bottles. However, the bottles are capable of cycling around 200 times and, provided they are consistently returned, could remain in circulation for about a decade.

The scope of Oaklands' customer base, the fact they make up roughly a quarter of the region's milk market share, and the resultant scale of their waste prevention impact makes their reusable packaging system **one of the most impactful in the entire country** (alongside ABC Swappa Crate and CHEP pallets), and certainly the most impactful reusable packaging system in New Zealand's milk industry today.





Nevertheless, it remains difficult to contextualise individual business insights within the wider Nelson-Tasman economy, to gain a sense of total market share for products in reusable packaging. This would require improved reporting from **all** businesses about their packaging consumption generally, e.g. the total numbers of packaged product put to market (whether single-use or reusable) and by packaging unit, not just volume.

Measuring the waste avoidance impact of current reusable packaging systems is also difficult, though some tools are being introduced to the market e.g., the **CupCycling with Swappa App**.

Conventional waste minimisation metrics focus on rates of diversion after waste has been produced, and assessments are usually conducted by Councils based on the materials that appear through waste and recycling services. However, reuse systems prevent waste at source by displacing the creation of multiple packaging items that would otherwise appear in waste or recycling bins.

Quantifying exactly how much packaging waste is prevented requires tracking the total product sold via reuse systems and the return/refill cycles of each individual reusable container. Furthermore, the relevant point of measurement places the data capture burden on producers and retailers, rather than Councils, further highlighting the importance of effective data tracking tools with low administrative burdens.

Keeping track of impact: Swappa App

Technology designed to track reusable packaging may start to make it easier to collect reliable data on waste avoidance. For example, the Swappa App developed by IdealCup/CupCycling keeps track of every reusable cup borrowed, returned and “non-returned” through the app, per merchant and per user (customer). Swappa has a backend central dashboard where each transaction is logged live and cafes receive monthly reports on their specific usage. The data collection means that the reuse system’s performance and waste avoidance impact can be tracked over time.

Since its launch in October 2021, there have been over **5,000 discrete loans of reusable cups** via the App, equating to an equivalent number of single-use cups avoided. This figure comes from a fleet of around 1,000 cups spread across 11 cafes. The App demonstrates a **return rate of ~98%**, with each cup having cycled about 3-4 times so far (this isn’t a final reuse rate as the cups are still in circulation). The breakeven point of the IdealCup used in the CupCycling system is 17 uses. As the dataset grows over time, it will be possible to track actual reuse rates against this benchmark.

SNAPSHOT

WATCH

THIS

SPACE

3. ESTABLISHING, SUSTAINING AND SCALING REUSABLE PACKAGING IN NELSON-TASMAN

3.1 | The benefits of running a reusable packaging system

We asked interviewees to explain why they chose to operate reusable packaging systems, why they wanted to expand their reusable packaging offering or why they wanted to implement reusable packaging if they hadn't already. The answers demonstrate that while the desire to be a good kaitiaki is a powerful motivator, **the perceived benefits of reusable packaging go beyond the sustainability 'feel-good' factor** and include tangible and intangible benefits, from cost-savings to enhanced brand value:

Values alignment and integrity: Reusable packaging reduces waste and thus aligns with businesses' environmental or sustainability values, and the sense of responsibility that owners and staff have to 'do the right thing'. It is also a visible way to add integrity to the company's sustainability initiatives and messaging.

Reach more customers/meet demand: Operating a reusable packaging system allows businesses to reach a segment of the consumer, hospitality or retail market that actively seeks this option.

Cost savings: Reusable packaging systems can save money. For example, selling product via refill by bulk dispenser models is more efficient and therefore cost-effective; returnable systems reduce the cost of continually buying more packaging; commercial customers, like hospitality outlets, can save money from reduced packaging rubbish and recycling; and certain reuse systems can reduce product wastage vis-a-vis single-serve packets.

Being ahead of the curve: Reusable packaging may soon become necessary, from an environmental and legislative perspective. Adopting reusables now puts businesses on the leading edge of this transition and better prepares them for the shift when it arrives.

Competitive advantage: Using reusable packaging rather than single-use gives a business or product a positive point of difference vis-à-vis competitors.

Builds customer loyalty: Reusable packaging systems have intrinsic characteristics that foster connection and loyalty between businesses and customers, e.g. returnable packaging/swap systems facilitate repeat purchases; buying via refill models is more interactive and brings customers to factories or means they spend more time in retail stores that offer this vending system.

Reduces carbon emissions: Apart from reducing waste, using reusable packaging supports businesses' efforts to reduce carbon emissions. This can also translate to cost savings as the carbon price increases, particularly for businesses who are offsetting.

Supports local businesses: Reusable packaging systems tend to work best between companies that are proximate to each other – so pursuing reusable packaging options often supports the local economy.

Resilience: Reusable packaging is designed to be refilled many times, so reusable packaging systems enable businesses to extend the useful lifespan of their packaging. This reduces their vulnerability to single-use packaging shortages, shipping delays and supply chain disruptions caused by global events like the covid pandemic.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS: WHY REUSABLE PACKAGING SYSTEMS ARE IMPORTANT TO INTERVIEWEES

“I do this at home in my own life anyway. It doesn't feel right to keep buying disposables when we know there is another way and companies out there are happy to adjust to it. It doesn't cost anything extra or take up any extra time. It doesn't feel like we are doing anything special, it's just what we do.”

“Using reusable bulk dispensers to sell product opens you up to a lot of different markets: to the retail stores, private people, and industry players who want to buy that way.”

“Everyone in this business is a human being and most of us really care about leaving the planet in a better state than we found it.”

“You can't question your values. Our mission, with our business, is to leave the planet better than we found it. So, literally every decision that we make supports that. As we grow, we want the growth to equate to good for the planet... reusable packaging supports the values that we can't ignore. It helps us sleep at night.”

“The reuse/refill aspect is a game changer for some customers and retailers in choosing our product over someone else's.”

“If you can prove to consumers that you are really doing your bit – that will improve the perception of your brand. Reducing volumes of waste in itself is a huge drawcard.”

“At some point, people are going to wake up and say that packaging is one of the most wasteful things that we can do on this planet and they'll go back to some of the things that we used to do. We used to supply food in a lot more reusable packaging than we do today. It's

not mainstream today, but at some point the true cost of unsustainable packaging will come home to roost.”

“We're disgusted about the level of waste in our industry and the throwaway culture.”

“It's the right thing to do... It aligns with our intergenerational threads. We want to ensure that we are good kaitiaki, and that we leave this land better than how it was created. We are really mindful as a business of the impact we are having on the environment and on our people.”

“At some point, you need to think about the fact it's going to be mandated that you can't use disposables, what is going to be your strategy then?”

“Buying new jars isn't cheap. By the time you put shipping on – and with shipping costs and the price of packaging going up, as well as inflation – it gets better to reuse, economically.”

“We are a small population with a big country, but I still see rubbish in places where it shouldn't be. We can be better. We should be leading by example to the rest of the world because we can. We have the potential to do it.”

“If you are going to be competitive in our industry and say you are natural or sustainable, to walk the talk you do need to have some reusable packaging or at least a strong recycling programme.”

Source: interviews with 12 Nelson-Tasman local businesses and stakeholders, 2022



3.2 | The barriers to establishing, sustaining and growing reusable packaging systems

Despite the powerful motivations expressed by interviewees, setting-up, running or growing a reusable packaging system is challenging. The barriers interviewees outlined reflect those faced by businesses elsewhere in New Zealand⁸. These generally stem from surrounding regulatory, economic and infrastructural settings—which are wired for single-use—rather than intrinsic problems associated with reuse. These settings actively obstruct interviewees (but also society generally) from realising the full potential benefits of reuse. The barriers are important to understand because thought needs to be given to addressing them in order to unlock the opportunities discussed in this report.

..... Upfront cost (time and money)

Functional reusable packaging systems require certain infrastructure and assets that have a high upfront capital cost, which can be unaffordable for some businesses, e.g.:

- Fleets of reusable containers.
- Dispensing systems like bulk bins or vending machines.
- Equipment needed to operate systems effectively, such as washing infrastructure or delivery vehicles.
- Accompanying software systems to manage logistics efficiently, such as app-development.

Furthermore, because single-use packaging is the norm, producers, retailers, hospitality outlets or packaging providers who want to develop, implement or expand reusable packaging systems find they need to invest time and effort researching or inventing new reuse systems and processes from scratch.

“Bulk bins are a really big investment – much bigger than most people would imagine.”

–Retailer interviewee 2022



High operational costs vis-à-vis single-use

Many businesses struggle to make initial reusable packaging investments or to find the time to prioritise or develop reuse systems. This is especially so because these investments may not pay-off over time due to economic settings that favour products in single-use packaging. Single-use packaging is artificially cheap to buy because the real costs are externalised, and its end-of-life is subsidised by public rubbish and recycling systems.

In contrast, reusable packaging systems are privately-run, and operational costs for reverse logistics and preparing containers for reuse are all internalised (e.g. the freight/transport for getting reusable containers back from customers, and labour/time for washing, cleaning, refilling containers or managing bulk dispenser systems).

For example, in addition to the ordinary costs of producing milk, **Oaklands Milk** hires 35 FTE staff to fulfil the tasks associated with running their reusable packaging system, with 2 fulltime staff members dedicated to washing bottles alone, and a part-time staff member washing the vending machine canisters. Many businesses who run returnable packaging systems also described the cost (both financially and in terms of administrative burden) of arranging returns of empty packaging via the courier/postal system.

“We bear the cost that others don’t – primarily because we have got the package for its full life whereas the other sellers only have it initially, without the disposal costs.”

–Producer interviewee 2022



Lack of public infrastructure/ services for reuse

The lack of collective infrastructure or third-party providers of reusable packaging means that businesses who want to use reusable packaging for their products – particularly B2C returnable packaging – have to set up and run their packaging system themselves. This is not expected of businesses who operate single-use packaging systems, who benefit from municipal rubbish and recycling infrastructure and collection services.

Apart from being cost prohibitive for many businesses, vertically integrating reusable packaging into business models is likely to increase prices for products in reusables because of a lack of economies of scale.

Ultimately, if vertical integration is not viable, a business simply cannot proceed with reusable packaging. Nelson beverage producer, **Chia Sisters**, have recently talked publically about this problem and begun advocating for an organised national system for reusable beverage packaging, alongside a number of other beverage producers, industry groups, independent experts and NGOs around the country?

“Vertical integration is not viable for a lot of businesses. As a business, you can’t do it all. People are just too busy, you have to be a pretty big company to have a proper washing set up yourself and be able to offset it against the cost of buying in new jars.”

–Producer interviewee 2022

“... at Chia Sisters we decided that we should be doing better than relying on recycling. We investigated returns of empty bottles to our juicery in Nelson so that we could refill bottles. We found that establishing a national returns system is inefficient for a company our size.”

–Florence Van Dyke of Chia Sisters, 2022¹⁰



Customer engagement and price expectations

Reusable packaging requires different types of engagement from both household and commercial customers and a willingness to adapt habits and systems to work for reuse. For example, retailers have to be willing to manage keg systems or act as drop off points for empty B2C packaging. Meanwhile, household customers have to be willing to return empty containers for reuse, to remember their own bags or containers for refill at bulk dispensers, or to pay extra to cover the internalised cost of the reusable packaging system.

Given the difficulty of establishing and maintaining this level of accommodation, producers who operate reusable packaging as their main packaging choice might find themselves excluded from certain segments of the household or commercial customer market.

Others feel compelled to subsidise or incentivise customers to participate, which eats into their profit margin. For example, most businesses cover the freight costs for customers to return their empty packages. One producer offers a discount to customers who bring their own reusable packaging for refill that is **16 times greater** than the cost to the business of simply purchasing a new single-use package. Both producers and retailer interviewees said they were having to increase their range of single-use packaged products to make the sales needed to cross-subsidise their reusable packaging offering.

“People started with a big bang, bulk bin shopping, and then disappeared because it was too much for them... Shopping is a habit. People eat and buy the same things. Changing habits is really hard.

—Retailer interviewee 2022

A lot of interviewees also noted that consumers are price-driven, but expectations around prices don't reflect the reality of what it costs to deliver reusable packaging systems in a market where single-use packaging costs are externalised. Several interviewees noted that consumers often expect that products sold via bulk dispensers or in reusable packaging should cost less.

Others noted that the association of bulk dispensers with low-value products can be a disincentive to adopt these systems, especially if products in consumer-facing single-use packaging can attract a premium price that exceeds any cost savings producers might make from packaging into bulk reusables. For example, one winery that has filled into kegs notes that even though it is more efficient to package wine into kegs and reduces packaging and labelling costs, these cost savings are smaller than the lost premium that comes from selling wine in a bottle.

“People want and demand cheap food to come in cheap packaging. But it's only cheap from one POV, it's not cheap in its whole lifecycle and that hasn't been recognised yet.”

—Producer interviewee 2022

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Insufficient buy-in from key supply chain stakeholders

Reusable packaging requires cooperation across the supply chain. However, this is difficult for individual businesses to broker and there are few industry groups putting their weight behind this within their sectors. Many producers we interviewed noted that **mainstream supermarkets are not open to reusable packaging systems**, which effectively shuts products in reusable packaging out of most of the retail market. Meanwhile, smaller grocery retailers noted that the non-participation of major food suppliers in reuse makes it difficult to establish B2B returnable packaging systems to replenish their bulk dispensers.

Almost all interviewees noted that the lack of distribution or courier companies who operate or support reverse logistics creates risks and increased cost for businesses seeking to run reuse systems and ensure their product is delivered safely and their packaging returned.

“With larger supermarket chains it’s logistically intensive to set up reuse systems, and they hold so much power—they say, ‘Jump!’ We say, ‘How high?’—getting a product ranged is really difficult, let alone getting them to take on extra logistics with refill.”

—Producer interviewee 2022

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Other barriers interviewees mentioned

- Having to compete against the promotion of recycling as an appropriate option for packaging and consumer perceptions that reusable packaging is inconvenient or more expensive.
- Some producers make a lot of money out of branded single-use packaging like serviceware that goes with their product, so switching to unbranded reusables would mean a lost revenue stream.
- Covid has impacted reusable packaging systems due to the temporary or permanent closure of businesses that were key stockists or customers of products in reusables, and due to reducing collective bandwidth to engage with reuse systems upon reopening.
- Many businesses are wholly or primarily export-oriented, which is not well-suited to reusable packaging logistics.
- Some reusable packaging systems, such as refill by bulk dispenser models, require retailers or hospitality outlets to sell a certain quantity of product within a certain amount of time before it goes off, which isn’t always possible.
- Food Safety laws and internal food safety protocols and quality standards can hinder the roll-out of reusable packaging systems.

4. OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCALING AND EXPANDING REUSABLE PACKAGING ACTIVITY

We see two key categories of opportunities to grow reusable packaging in the Nelson-Tasman region. The first are enabling conditions to advance reuse created by the current **local and national context**. The second are **practical ideas** that interviewees identified as worth exploring and progressing.

4.1 | Local and national context

A window of opportunity currently exists to take action to increase the scope and impact of reusable packaging systems in Nelson-Tasman, due to some favourable conditions in the regional and national context. These conditions could also allow the region to better tell and promote its reusable packaging story and showcase Nelson-Tasman's leadership in fostering circular business models, jobs and lifestyles. These contextual conditions are:

- Nelson-Tasman's pre-existing pro-reuse culture and an openness amongst businesses to do more and to collaborate.
- A growing appetite for reuse and refill packaging alternatives from central government, including national funding opportunities, such as the Plastics Innovation Fund, that could be used to help fill key infrastructure and service gaps.
- Relevant strategic activity at the regional level e.g. ongoing council waste management and minimisation planning (e.g. the review of the Joint Waste Management and Minimisation Plan).

Nelson-Tasman's pre-existing culture of reuse and collaboration

Nelson-Tasman has a head start on reusable packaging compared to other parts of New Zealand because of the wide range of businesses who already operate reusable packaging systems.

Residents have many daily opportunities to participate in reusable packaging systems and the existence of some prominent, well-loved examples (e.g. Oaklands Milk, Pic's Perfit jar swap system) has fostered a visible culture and understanding of reuse in the region, and a strong foundation of reuse activity from which to grow. The work of **Waste No More - Nelson Whakatū** to introduce reusable serviceware to events in the Nelson-Tasman region (supported by Nelson City Council) has further



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added to the visibility and public acceptability of reuse. Interviewees demonstrated high levels of engagement regarding the prospect of increasing their reusable packaging offering, and many believe that Nelson-Tasman locals are willing to participate in reusable packaging systems.

By and large, **interviewees were also keen to collaborate within and across sectors to grow reuse**, with one interviewee noting that collaboration is “absolutely key”. Several interviewees identified some existing platforms for local business collaboration that could be supported to include reuse on their agenda, including **Businesses for Climate Action, Our Town Motueka**, and the **Nelson Regional Development Agency**. Others noted that businesses in their industry in the region already collaborated and it wouldn’t be hard to get some cross-sector reuse initiatives off the ground. Third-party organisations with expertise in developing and delivering reuse systems, such as **Waste No More - Nelson Whakatū**, and community groups like the **Nelson-Tasman Climate Forum**, are additional vehicles for building collaborative action, and a wider mandate for reuse.

Some of the topics proposed as suitable avenues for collaboration were:

- sharing information and ideas about current or potential reusable packaging systems
- reusable packaging trials for particular products or sectors
- local reusable container standardisation to make reuse system logistics more efficient
- an overarching marketing campaign for reuse that runs across companies and the two Councils to grow the profile of reuse as a movement.

“Nelson-Tasman is a food bowl of New Zealand. We have a strong food and beverage culture here and a lot of producers. Also, because Nelson-Tasman is small, there is a strange level of collaboration between these businesses who are actually competitors. There is definitely scope for the businesses in our region to work together and potentially create a reuse brand for the Nelson-Tasman food and beverage sector.”

—Producer interviewee 2022

“We have a lot of locals who just come in for refills at the factory with their own bottles.”

—Producer interviewee 2022

“I would love to work with other companies on reusable packaging. I think the only way that we can get this to work properly is by getting everyone on board because the shift needs to happen. At the moment, it feels like we’re pushing against the grain and we need to create the solution that’s easy.”

—Producer interviewee 2022

“It would be great if Councils were to work with Businesses for Climate Action to broker reusable packaging trials. Businesses for Climate Action is perfect for trials, including regional trials, as we have a base of companies who are working together and are happy and interested to trial things.”—producer interviewee

—Producer interviewee 2022



Central government appetite for reuse/refill solutions and funding opportunities

Since 2018, several key publications from the Ministry for the Environment have expressed a Central Government interest in more reuse and refill packaging, including the National Plastics Action Plan (2021)¹¹, various waste policy consultation documents¹², a paper on plastic research, innovation and investment priorities (2021)¹³, and a position statement on compostable products (2022)¹⁴. The consultation documents on a new waste strategy (2021) and a beverage container return scheme (2022) both propose the possibility of targets for reusable packaging.¹⁵

In particular, the Government has stated that New Zealand needs to work towards using “less plastic”¹⁶, and that among other things, this requires a focus on “increasing the uptake of reuse and refillable models”¹⁷. In this respect, the Government has recognised that New Zealand already has some existing reuse models, but that these “need scale, infrastructure and behaviour change”¹⁸. Accordingly, the Government has highlighted how plastics innovation and investment must focus on research, infrastructure and behaviour change to¹⁹:

- increase the adoption of “innovative business models” based around “rethink, redesign, reuse, refill, reduce”;
- enable “washing and sanitisation for reusable packaging”; and
- increase “public willingness to move to reusable, refillable options”.

Uncertainty remains about whether Central Government will undertake legislative actions to level the uneven economic playing field between single-use packaging and reusable packaging. However, the commentary above does indicate that well-organised applications to the Waste Minimisation Fund and Plastics Innovation Fund to scale the uptake and use of reusable packaging, including efforts to fill key infrastructure and service gaps, could be looked upon favourably because they would seem to align with the Government’s currently expressed interest in reuse/refill solutions.




Ongoing regional waste minimisation planning, including review of the Joint Waste Management and Minimisation Plan (JWMMP)

The review of the JWMMP creates the opportunity for Nelson City Council and Tasman District Council to embed a strategic mandate to strengthen the focus on reuse and refill in the regional approach to waste minimisation. This would transform reusable packaging from a ‘nice to have’ into an essential element of the region’s low-waste, low-carbon, circular future. The JWMMP is also a key vehicle for putting some of the recommendations in this report into action, and reinforcing them with time-bound targets and potentially also some funding.



Regional Food and Beverage Tourism Strategy

In 2021, the Nelson Regional Development Agency commissioned a Food and Beverage Tourism Strategy (F&BT Strategy), which provides recommendations for showcasing the Nelson-Tasman region’s local food and beverage producers²⁰. The strategy presents an opportunity to boost the profile and presence of reusable packaging in the region and put Nelson-Tasman on the map as a leader of reusable packaging systems.



Our report findings suggest that **the region's strong foundation of reusable packaging systems is a unique point of difference for the local Nelson-Tasman food and beverage economy.** Furthermore, this point of difference can largely be attributed to the leadership and innovation of the region's food and beverage producers and retailers.

Accordingly, we see an opportunity to foreground reusable packaging systems when implementing the Strategy's key recommendations. This has the potential to showcase the region's innovative approach and its progress towards sustainability goals. Championing the reuse activity of the region's local producers by **strengthening the story about reusable packaging and sustainability in the Nelson-Tasman food and beverage sector** could also build a sense of pride, connection and loyalty for residents, while helping to communicate to visitors that 'this is how we do things here'.

Reusable packaging helps fulfil many of the F&B Strategy's goals around locality, interaction, connection, quality and care. The Strategy notes that Nelson-Tasman residents are "advocates for local F&B businesses and value the interaction with producers" and adds that locals would "value more interaction and transparency behind the scenes to understand what producers are doing to minimise the impact on the environment and socially responsible practices."²¹ The Strategy also notes that the experiences of food- and beverage-oriented travellers can be enhanced by "interactive experiences that showcase in-season local produce"²². Furthermore, sustainability is an emerging driver for travellers, suggesting that local food and beverage experiences should feature "environmental and socially responsible practices"²³.

Actively promoting and supporting reusable packaging systems would both leverage and realise, some of these desired outcomes and themes. For example:

- Reusable packaging systems can be interactive, e.g. **Oaklands Milk** vending machines, or the excitement of fill your own beer at a brewery. Our research in Tauranga showed that locals would take visitors to participate in "fill your own" experiences because it was an authentic and engaging experience that locals were proud of and that resulted in tasting and experiencing a local product²⁴.
- Reusable packaging systems tend to service local markets and products and therefore encapsulate that unique local, authentic experience, e.g. **Pic's Peanut Butter** Perfit jar swap system. There is a 'best kept secret' ethos to refill stores, particularly those that are well-used by local communities and not purely geared towards tourists. Visitors get to become 'one of the locals' by participating.
- A commitment to reuse or to phase-out single-use can create a place-based reuse culture that becomes part of a location's brand. For example, in Otago, the **Remarkables Market** and the **University of Otago** are proudly free of single-use cups, while the **SUC-free Wānaka** campaign²⁵ has made the town a leader in reusable alternatives for the hospitality industry. Furthermore, **Cardrona** is the world's first single-use free mountain. Nelson-Tasman could proactively market itself as the home of local hospitality outlets, accommodation providers and food and beverage producers adopting reusable packaging systems and running factory refill experiences.
- Reusable packaging communicates quality and care, while being a tangible example of businesses partnering with their customers to tread more lightly on the planet. Reusable packaging systems involve a bit more effort on the part of both the company and the customer, so they offer a way for parties on both sides of the transaction to collaborate and 'play their part' in building more sustainable community, while having the chance to interact and connect.

4.2 | Practical opportunities – a wishlist

All the businesses we interviewed expressed an interest or desire to vend more product in reusable packaging or to expand the reusable packaging systems they currently offer. Some interviewees have been researching and attempting to develop reusable packaging systems for some time already.

In addition to regulatory and policy changes at central government level (which most interviewees stated was necessary), each interviewee suggested practical initiatives that could help them to set up or scale their reusable packaging offerings.

Some of these initiatives would take planning and collaboration, some could be trialled relatively quickly. Each could benefit from industry participation/leadership, as well as support from both local and national government initiatives. We have gathered these together in a “Practical ideas bank/wishlist”, for ease of reference:

- More taps for kegs in hospitality and retail outlets in the region
- Regional reusable packaging washing infrastructure and a serviced collection/drop-off network for reusable packaging
- Standard reusable containers or reuse systems between producers and amongst retailers
- Collaborative reuse trials and pilots
- A promotional campaign for reuse
- More independent grocers, markets and innovative retail models



More taps for kegs throughout hospitality and retail outlets in the region

Beverage producers could increase the product they put into bulk dispensers if more hospitality and retail outlets installed the infrastructure needed to sell or serve a wider range of drinks on tap, e.g. for beer and cider, but also milk, wine, juice and other non-alcoholic drinks. Kegs are highly efficient because they are durable, can be reused thousands of times and each fill displaces multiple single-use packages. Accordingly, every kilogram of keg avoids approximately 688kg of single-use packaging over the keg’s expected lifespan²⁶. Compared to single-use beverage packaging (and also consumer-facing returnable bottles), kegs can be much more economically efficient to fill and distribute for producers.

However, there needs to be a demand to receive beverages in this way from commercial customers. While keg and tap systems are commonplace for beverages like beer, there can be obstacles to opening up this opportunity to other beverages (see the Chia Sisters case study below). Accordingly, a programme to subsidise a group of willing hospitality outlets and retailers to install tap and keg systems, such as a “sponsor a tap” initiative, as well as supporting innovation in differing keg sizes and material types, could help to increase keg usage in Nelson-Tasman for a wider range of beverages.

“If Council could encourage the uptake of kegs in hospitality that would be great. Maybe if there was some way to get the cafes on board – like SUC-free Wānaka – and essentially have them working together to trial sustainable, ideally local, options... if we could do that, that would be really cool, and a great story for the region.”

–Producer interviewee, 2022

Chia Sisters on tap: how a programme to support keg adoption could help

Chia Sisters has been trying to package their juices and health drinks into 20L stainless steel kegs for hospitality and retailer customers. The kegs allow hospitality outlets to pour drinks off the menu by the glass without the need for bottles. For retailers, hosting a keg means consumers can bring their own bottle to the store to purchase juice on tap. Chia Sisters can sell their product at an affordable rate by keg, they already have a fleet of kegs ready to go, and they have appropriate washing facilities at their factory to make the refill system food safe and viable. Despite this, the company notes the kegs “haven’t had much success or traction”.

The main issues are that most cafes and retailers do not have tap systems in place. Those that do would ordinarily be licensed, so hosting a Chia Sisters keg would require them to put a tap towards a product that is sold at a lower price than beer. The outlet would also need to have nitrogen on site because juice is a flat product, whereas ordinarily kegs for beer require CO₂. The product also has a 30 day shelf life, which can be difficult to get through for smaller grocer retailers who do not have the customer base to guarantee sale of 20L within the product shelf life.





Regional reusable packaging washing infrastructure and a serviced collection/drop-off network for reusable packaging

Almost all interviewees emphasised the need for shared infrastructure and systems for reusable packaging returns, washing and redistribution, particularly for B2C returnable packaging initiatives. These interviewees felt that regional infrastructure operated by a third-party was likely to be more efficient and convenient than lots of individual businesses trying to set up their own thing. In an ideal world, interviewees want to order packaging as they currently do, have it arrive at their factory ready-to-go, as it currently does, but know that it has been washed rather than made new. Several interviewees noted that they would be willing to contribute to the costs of a shared service. A collaboratively-funded feasibility study to understand the costs and logistics involved in setting up and running shared washing and redistribution infrastructure, including an exploration of the type of infrastructure required and whether it should be fixed or mobile, could be a good starting point.

In addition to washing infrastructure, interviewees raised the need for a formal regional network of established collection or drop-off points for used/empty reusable packaging to be returned to producers. Ideally, companies that already specialise in logistics, such as couriers or NZ Post, would participate. Currently, reusable serviceware can be returned to hospitality outlets that participate in a scheme, or retailers who stock products in B2C returnable packaging act as de facto drop-off points for empty packaging. However, these arrangements only really work well when there is a substantial network of outlets and retailers participating in reuse programmes, and for the producers who deliver their product and can pick up the empties when they drop off fresh product.

Some of the suggested ideas for more returns infrastructure were:

- Drop-off points for the courier bags that businesses use to send their product around the region, so producers can retrieve them for reuse.
- Drop-off points for bulk jerry cans to be cleaned and then redistributed to suppliers.
- B2C reusable packaging/serviceware drop-off points around town – either automated points like reverse vending machines or bespoke receptacles that look different to rubbish bins. See the **Yum Granola** honesty box case study below.

“Getting to a circular economy where things go around and around – that’s the ultimate. For glass bottles you would have to have bottle washing plants, and some way for them to go back to the industries where they came from. In an ideal world, those bottles would be sorted somewhere, sent for washing, packaged up and then sent back to the producers.”

–Producer interviewee 2022

“Businesses could pool together to get some reverse vending machines for returnable packaging – we could invest together and work in with councils and government to have more of these types of reuse facilities available.”

–Producer interviewee 2022

“If you could have businesses of the same industry with common types of packaging – like glass bottles – pooling together, that would make it easier.”

–Producer interviewee 2022



YUM GRANOLA REUSABLE PACKAGING HONESTY BOX: IMAGE SUPPLIED

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Standard reusable containers or reuse systems between producers and amongst retailers

Standardised reusable containers for B2C returnable packaging or standard systems for making reusable containers available for refilling at retail bulk dispensers would make it easier for producers and consumers to reuse.

Many of the region’s returnable packaging systems use containers that are bespoke to a particular producer rather than interchangeable. A degree of coordination and collaboration to simplify the range of packaging would help make reuse more affordable and efficient for companies.

Furthermore, most of the refill by bulk dispensing systems around Nelson–Tasman—e.g. grocery bulk bins or deli counters, or off-license sales of drinks on tap—rely on customers bringing their own reusables to fill, for the systems to avoid single-use packaging. Ideally, retailers would offer reusable containers to borrow for customers who forget to BYO. Breweries could develop a Nelson–Tasman

SNAPSHOT

Yum Granola honesty box

The **Yum Granola** honesty box system demonstrates the innovative ways that local businesses are seeking to operate reusable packaging reverse logistics in the absence of supporting infrastructure.

Yum Granola produces fresh artisan granola and has built reuse into its packaging systems in a number of ways. One innovation is the Yum Granola honesty box. Located in Central Nelson on the side of one of **Red Gallery’s** walls, the box enables people to order Yum Granola products online and still use their own container. At the point of purchase online, the customer selects the “honesty box” option. They receive the code for the box padlock, and then leave their own container in the box. The Yum Granola team pick the container up, take it to the factory, fill it up and return it to the honesty box within a day for the customer to pick up.

Yum Granola estimate about 40 to 50 people are currently using their honesty box system. They are looking to add another drop off box for customer BYO packaging at their factory in Stoke.



Collaborative reuse trials and pilots

Many interviewees raised the idea of sector-wide pilots of reusable packaging for a particular product, or cross-sector regional trials of reusable packaging systems across a supply chain. Interviewees thought this could be achieved through industry groups, Councils and other collaborative platforms like **Businesses for Climate Action** or the **Nelson-Tasman Climate Forum** working together. Many thought that focusing regionally makes sense as the geographical proximity of local producers, consumers, retailers and hospitality outlets increases the potential ease of getting trials off the ground, and their likelihood of success. The main ideas for trials related to:

- Producers of the same product type coming together to make B2B returnable packaging systems work for their product.
- Collaborating with courier companies to support return logistics for packaging and courier bags.
- Working with retailers and hospitality outlets to act as drop-off points for returnable packaging or to install more refill by bulk dispenser systems.
- Hospitality and tourism outlets coming together to implement a shared plan to phase-out single-use serveware for prepared food and drink.

“The majority of our café customers are in Nelson-Tasman – we deliver directly to them – we could deliver and pick up empty packaging. So, locally, we could trial more reusable packaging – it’d be a great testing ground.”

–Producer interviewee 2022



A promotional campaign for reuse

Our research showed that many of the reuse systems that exist in Nelson-Tasman are not well-promoted and awareness about their availability is predominantly spread by word-of-mouth. Virtually all the interviewees suggested a marketing campaign for reuse that combined information about why reusable packaging is environmentally beneficial, with practical information about the businesses in the region who are already championing reuse. Most interviewees thought there would be more engagement with their existing reusable packaging offerings if the public were better aware that these offerings existed in the first place.

Currently, individual businesses might do occasional social media posts about the reuse options they provide, but on the whole they lack time to run an effective marketing campaign. Furthermore, such a campaign would likely be more impactful if it wasn’t attached to any particular business, and if it was run by an external entity like Council to bring credibility. As one interviewee said, “a strong external voice for reuse really helps”. In addition to a general marketing and education campaign, one of the practical suggestions that several interviewees put forward was a reusable packaging directory for the region that enabled end users (whether commercial or household) to find all the retailers and producers in the region that use or offer reusable packaging (whether B2C or B2B). Such a directory would also help to link up producers who are keen to establish reusable packaging systems with each other.

“I think that it would be really awesome to increase awareness around the refill system that we offer and potentially really support that with more of a push so that more people engaged with it and put more in circulation.”

–Producer interviewee 2022



More independent grocers, markets and innovative retail models

Most interviewees find they have greater success getting products in reusable packaging stocked in grocery retailers that aren't supermarkets, or when they are able to sell these products direct to consumers (e.g. via home delivery or markets).

In comparison to other parts of New Zealand, Nelson-Tasman already has a comparatively large range of grocery options beyond the two supermarket chains, as well as thriving markets. Nevertheless, producers felt that more independent grocers, more markets, and more diversity in the grocery sector generally, would help to increase demand and reach for products in reusable packaging. One interviewee noted that New Zealand used to have mobile butchers that called round to your house, and far greater frequency of farmers' markets.

Reinstating these types of retail business models would create a platform and a culture for reuse. Supporting these business to also champion reuse is important, such as the feasibility work to investigate options to avoid or reduce waste at the Nelson Saturday Market, for which Nelson City Council has provided a grant to Waste No More to deliver.

"It would save time if there was info out there of all the companies who do offer reusables – each company wouldn't have to do their own research."

–Producer interviewee 2022

"If there was more visibility about reusing – physical infrastructure as well as marketing, education in schools and incentivisation – that would put pressure on companies to change as well."

–Producer interviewee 2022



PIC'S PEANUT BUTTER PERFIT JAR SWAP SYSTEM IN RETAIL. IMAGE SUPPLIED

5. RECOMMENDED ACTIONS TO UNLOCK OPPORTUNITIES

We have outlined the opportunities created by the current local and national context, and by the existence of a number of practical initiatives that businesses are keen to explore. The final section of this report recommends actions that will help unlock these opportunities. We have targeted these recommendations to different stakeholders in the Nelson-Tasman region.

5.1 | Opportunities for local government

In the New Zealand context, councils hold responsibility for managing and minimising waste. Packaging makes up a considerable amount of waste for most households and hospitality businesses, and reuse is a recognised minimisation strategy for all waste streams.

Councils are required by s 44 of the Waste Minimisation Act to consider the waste hierarchy (which prioritises reduction and reuse strategies over recycling and disposal) when preparing and reviewing WMMPs. Across New Zealand, councils could do more to move their territories up the waste hierarchy, to reduce the barriers to reusable packaging systems and to be a louder and more supportive voice for reuse. We list **six actions** councils could take.

Further recommended actions for local government can be found in Chapter 3.1 of our report *Reusable packaging in Aotearoa*²⁷.

1. TO SUPPORT A CULTURE OF REUSE, CONSIDER A REUSABLE PACKAGING PROGRAMME OF INITIATIVES IN THE JOINT WASTE MANAGEMENT AND MINIMISATION PLAN (JWMMP)

Councils could consider inserting into the JWMMP a programme of policies for increasing the uptake of reusable packaging across the region, reinforced by specific, time-bound reuse targets and initiatives. Ideally, plans, targets and initiatives would be developed specifically for reuse, i.e. separate from any recycling and composting goals/targets, and designed to reduce some of the barriers to reuse that interviewees have highlighted. Initiatives (some of which are discussed in more detail in the remainder of this section) could include:

- Timebound targets to increase the availability and impact of reusable packaging systems and reduce single-use packaging.
- Initiatives such as grants prioritising reuse, particularly where this helps to fill gaps in shared infrastructure and services, and/or supporting businesses to deliver reusable packaging programmes or to apply to central government for funding to fill key service or infrastructure gaps.
- A commitment to prioritise reusable packaging in Council procurement (including service delivery) and to phase-out use of single-use serviceware or packaged products like bottled water at all Council-run events, facilities and buildings.
- Promoting reuse and the region's existing reusable packaging systems as a core part of Council waste minimisation communications and public information going forward.
- Investigate how support for reuse activities such as reusable packaging trials can be built into Council services and infrastructure.
- Advocacy to central government on packaging policy and infrastructural investment to support reusable packaging systems.



VIEW OF NELSON
IMAGE SUPPLIED BY NELSON CITY COUNCIL

2. ADOPT PROCUREMENT AND INVESTMENT POLICIES THAT FAVOUR REUSABLE PACKAGING

Councils are “anchor institutions” who can leverage their significant purchasing power and mana in the community, their financial, property and land assets, and their bylaw-making power to promote certain practices that build up local circular economies and community wealth²⁸. For reusable packaging, council can expand the accessibility and availability of reusable packaging by:

- leading by example through ensuring council-run events and venues are 100% reusable in serviceware and prioritise products in reusable packaging, and through staff behaviour and official communications with residents
- procuring businesses offering reusable packaging options and reuse services to fulfil council contracts and in-house requirements; and
- using investment, property and land assets to support reusable packaging initiatives.

Councils’ power to bring a good reusable packaging idea to life through targeted financial support and procurement should not be underestimated, particularly for smaller local businesses and organisations. Nelson City Council’s financial support of **Waste No More - Nelson Whakatū** to deliver reusable serviceware at events is an example of the impact that Council grants can have in supporting reuse systems, both within and beyond the Council jurisdiction. The Waste No More - Nelson Whakatū reusable serviceware system and wash truck services events beyond Nelson, and has also been an inspiration for many other communities around New Zealand.

3. SUPPORT REUSE TRIALS, INCLUDING COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS AND INDUSTRY PEER SUPPORT

Many of the practical ideas that interviewees put forward require trialling and cross-sector collaboration to get off the ground. Council can play a valuable role in generating enthusiasm for reuse and/or supporting parties to collaborate. One interviewee noted that Council should allow industry groups to come up with ideas independently, and then invite Council’s participation later, if necessary, if they have specific requests for support. We note that while Council’s job is not necessarily to dictate how industry might go about increasing reusable packaging, Council does have the mana to support collaboration for reuse in the first place.

Building an ethos of collaborative peer support would help to increase reusable packaging in the region. There are many individuals and businesses in Nelson-Tasman with expertise in establishing and running reusable packaging systems - from the businesses discussed in this report, to those who have developed reuse systems in other contexts. In addition, there are businesses who are keen to offer reusable packaging or phase-out disposables, but may be unsure where to start. Industry groups and councils, for example through their support for **Businesses for Climate Action**, could encourage and support the development of activities such as an accelerator programme for reusable packaging that includes an element of peer support.

4. INCLUDE REUSABLE PACKAGING IN COUNCIL WASTE MINIMISATION COMMUNICATIONS TO RESIDENTS AND BUSINESSES

Integrating a coordinated public education and promotional campaign for reusable packaging in Nelson-Tasman as part of Councils' official waste minimisation communications would help to raise awareness of the reusable packaging opportunities in the region, and counterbalance the constant messaging about recycling.

Currently, the information that councils disseminate to the public about waste minimisation is not consistent across the layers of the waste hierarchy. Information about rubbish and recycling dominates communications and can also be quite directional and tied to specific services, e.g. "put these products in this bin", "take this product to these places", "where and when to put out your bin for collection". In contrast, advice about activities up the waste hierarchy are often vague and aspirational or tied to one-off workshops, rather than pointing residents to the businesses and initiatives in the region that support prevention and reuse, and how to engage with them.

Messaging in official council waste communications could support residents and businesses to understand the 'why' of reuse (particularly in relation to waste minimisation and climate mitigation) and offer organised, instructional information about reuse in the region. These communications could be developed in partnership with the local businesses and industry that operate reusable packaging systems and initiatives, to ensure the communications are fit-for-purpose and help to fill known knowledge gaps.

"Councils could definitely help to raise awareness about reusable packaging."—
hospitality interviewee

—Hospitality interviewee 2022

5. ADVOCATE FOR REUSABLE PACKAGING AMONGST LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND TO CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

Our Nelson-Tasman research indicates that despite the existence of some robust reusable packaging systems across the region and a willingness to do more, many of the existing initiatives are reaching a ceiling within current economic and infrastructural settings. Key interventions and support are likely necessary to unlock further growth (or to stop the risk of 'backsliding' to single-use).

Council can help to target current barriers to establishing, sustaining and expanding reusable packaging systems by advocating to central government for a more favourable economic and regulatory environment for reusable packaging and to investigate ways to fill key infrastructure/service gaps.

Virtually all interviewees highlighted the need to reduce what they perceived as the unfairness in the current packaging and waste systems, where the price of single-use packaging does not reflect its true cost, and where local and central government services and investment appear to subsidise or strengthen single-use packaging systems, e.g. through the provision of kerbside recycling and investment in infrastructure to collect, sort and process single-use packaging.

"I think most consumers are definitely getting more environmentally aware. There's definitely a want for packaging to be reused, there's just no systems in place. If there was leadership from council and government to really start incentivising reuse, and if it was forced on people in industry, it would work."

—Producer interviewee 2022

These perceptions are supported by the literature on reusable packaging, which shows that the cost externalisation of the linear economy disadvantages circular systems like reuse, and that continued investment and service delivery at the bottom of the waste hierarchy actively competes with reuse and thus further distorts an already distorted market. These realities can inform advocacy to central government.

Many interviewees felt that Central Government action was needed to address this problem, and were sceptical or unsure about the value of local/regional action. One retailer interviewee noted “Nelson and Tasman can’t operate in isolation, it’s just not possible – it’s got to be a national directive.”

However, Councils **can accelerate national action**. Historically, Councils have adopted various strategies to advocate for improved national waste policy. For example, many councils strongly advocated, both individually (in their Waste Management and Minimisation Plans) and collectively (through forums like Local Government New Zealand and WasteMINZ), for central government policies like a beverage container return scheme, mandatory product stewardship, and single-use plastic bans. In many cases, this advocacy has been preceded by the development of shared positions on necessary policy, e.g. the WasteMINZ Local Government Waste Management Manifesto in 2018 and its 2020 update²⁹.

Both Councils could use national networks such as the WasteMINZ TAO Forum and the local government zui group to support a local government level coordinated approach to support reuse. This could form the basis of coherent advocacy to central government.

For guidance, we have included our previously released chapter of recommended actions central government can take to support reusable packaging in **Appendix 3** of this report.

“I worry whether we will ever get the scalability we need given the necessary government support to make reusable packaging happen. There are so many of us out there fighting to get scaleable systems, but we need to have that government support and voice.”

—Producer interviewee 2022

“... it’s not a level playing field and we are picking up far too much of the downstream cost through our reusable packaging system. Other people are being subsidised as they aren’t paying the full cost of their packaging and its disposal.”

—Producer interviewee 2022

“We are trying to do our bit as far as sustainability goes, but there is a lot that needs to be done with taxing systemic problems. So, any overarching command from council or government to do reuse or not to use single-use helps us to do that.”

—Producer interviewee 2022

6. SUPPORT INDUSTRY AND COMMUNITY TO ADDRESS INFRASTRUCTURE AND LOGISTICS GAPS

Interviewees consistently raised the need for shared infrastructure and systems for reusable packaging returns, washing and redistribution, as well as drop-off points or a collection service for reusable packaging around the region. Most interviewees also made clear that they cannot establish scaled systems on their own and believe a degree of public support is required.

Local governments across Aotearoa, including the two territorial authorities of the Nelson-Tasman region, currently procure household rubbish and recycling services for single-use packaging. These systems compete with reusable packaging systems. In order to achieve outcomes for packaging that move higher up the waste hierarchy, it could be helpful for Council to consider how it could partner with willing segments of the commercial sector to fill gaps in the infrastructure and service delivery for reusable packaging, as councils have done in the past for recyclable packaging. For example, by providing co-funding for industry applications to central government funds to get shared reuse infrastructure or services off the ground.

Considering in the future how Council services and facilities can support reuse may help to uncover other practical ways that Council could support reverse logistics and washing initiatives at relevant sites within council control, including transfer stations.



“I think it’s strange that every beverage company should invest in a washing facility. I imagine a more economic way would be to have a washing facility in each region... I want to take responsibility for getting that bottle back and for paying for it. But, the problem is, I can’t do it alone. It needs to be bigger.”

—Producer interviewee 2022

“...we would absolutely be 200% behind anything council could do to make it easier for businesses in the reuse space to access this infrastructure.”

—Producer interviewee 2022



5.2 | Opportunities for business and industry groups

1. SUPPLIERS AND PRODUCERS: OFFER REUSE AND REFILL WHENEVER YOU CAN

Product manufacturers and suppliers are critical to the growth of reusable packaging. Ultimately, businesses make the choice about how they package their products to other businesses and to consumers. The more businesses that choose to supply products to retailers and other commercial operators in reusable packaging, or to implement reusable packaging trials with the local businesses they supply, the more reuse systems will grow. Indeed, one hospitality interviewee who has had ongoing success in implementing reusable packaging systems noted that a key factor enabling this success is the growing number of suppliers who now initiate or willingly engage in B2B and B2C reuse systems.

Similarly, more local producers could offer Nelson-Tasman residents the opportunity to access their products in refill or returnable packaging formats – or to promote these options where they are available. This could include operating more returnable packaging initiatives, such as jar swap systems at local markets or with willing retailers. Some interviewees suggested that producers of the same industry could agree to use the same standardised package to make it easier to create an efficient and cost-effective reuse system.

Often, establishing refill by bulk dispenser systems is the fastest and most cost effective approach for producers to get reusable packaging systems off the ground. One entry-level opportunity for producers to participate in reusable packaging systems is **Refill Revolution** – a national campaign that is the brainchild of Nelson businesses, **Chia Sisters** and **Pic's Peanut Butter**. Refill

Revolution is a nationwide campaign and toolkit for producers, designed to encourage producers to expand and promote their refill offerings, and shift consumer preferences towards refilling containers and bottles. Refill Revolution will launch in February 2023 with a month-long campaign that is focused on raising the profile of the different refill options across New Zealand. Producers can get involved by driving awareness of their refill offer (or coming up with one, such as enabling consumers to refill product direct at their factory) using the Refill Revolution campaign assets, activating a refill event at their local markets using the Refill Revolution event toolkit, and attending an online workshop to hear from circular economy thought leaders and other producers.

Food and beverage producers could also advocate for reusable packaging to be embedded in the implementation of the regional F&BT Strategy and any other new food and beverage initiatives in the region. This is both an opportunity to be harnessed, and a way of avoiding having to retrofit reuse systems onto single-use systems further down the track. It is not our place to predetermine how reusable packaging would be prioritised in any new initiatives, as this is something that would be best co-created in collaboration with food and beverage producers. However, some of the clearest opportunities to ensure that the F&BT Strategy both facilitates and is future-proofed for a wider movement towards reuse include:

- A commitment to ensure any new venues, locations, hubs or pods connected to the strategy use only reusable serviceware (e.g. cups, plates, bowls, cutlery etc.).



STAFF FROM PICO'S PEANUT BUTTER AND CHIA SISTERS AT THE CHIA SISTERS FACTORY. IMAGE SUPPLIED.

- Designing any new locations or facilities to include infrastructure that enables beverages to be dispensed on tap, e.g. kegs, taps and both CO2 and nitrogen.
- Supporting producers to make refills part of their offering if their factories are open to the public and/or for tourism experiences, e.g. initiatives like **Refill Revolution**.
- Harnessing the cross-sector collaboration inherent in implementing the strategy to accelerate collaboration and brainstorming to get reuse systems off the ground, for the benefit of all food and beverage producers in the region.
- Integrating reusable packaging opportunities and initiatives into any promotional and digital material created as a result of the strategy's implementation. This could include signage and showcasing of producer reuse initiatives at any new locations and facilities, a map of shared "drop off locations" for returnable packaging (building on the idea of the **Yum Granola** honesty box), and cafes that operate reusable cup systems like **CupCycling with Swappa App**, or producers who participate in initiatives like **Refill Revolution**.

"I'm not sure if this is too obvious, but one specific action businesses can take to normalise and increase the uptake of reusable packaging is just offering it! For example, offer it at your site - if people don't see it happening then they're less likely to adopt it. Whereas, if it's normalised by producers offering it, people are more likely to respond and build that into their lives."

—Producer interviewee 2022

"It'd be great if all the glass bottles and jars businesses used were exactly the same and you could return any of them to your favourite supplier."

—Producer interviewee 2022

2. HOSPITALITY, TOURISM AND ACCOMMODATION: BE A CUSTOMER FOR PRODUCTS IN REUSABLES AND COLLABORATE TO DE-RISK THE PHASE-OUT OF SINGLE-USE.

Hospitality, tourism and accommodation businesses in Nelson-Tasman are cornerstone customers for many local producers and purchase in larger quantities than households. Consequently, these businesses have the power to drive increased demand for reusable packaging systems from producers and suppliers. They can also help to normalise reuse culture and denormalise throwaway culture by phasing out the provision of single-use serviceware items, like coffee cups and takeaway food containers. The pace and quantity of purchases by the hospitality sector creates increased potential for rapid quantitative impact, even from minor successes. For example, the high numbers of cafes throughout the region using **Oaklands Milk** demonstrates the impact that just one product switch can make.

We see the potential for the hospitality, tourism and accommodation sectors to work together, or through relevant industry sector groups, to commit to increase use of products in reusable packaging, and to replace the single-use packaging they use, dispense to customers, or dispose of, with reuse systems. This could be approached as a 'one-by-one' challenge where outlets work systematically through a list of products to source in reusable packaging over a set time period, or a to-do list of goals, for example:

- Establishing B2B returnable packaging systems for any products the cafes buy that are locally

produced, e.g. returnable buckets for coffee beans between local roasters and cafes.

- Addressing the packaging waste associated with takeaways by brokering a commitment across outlets to phase-out the use of single-use serviceware, starting with cups, and/or to become part of a reusable serviceware system like **CupCycling with Swappa App** or **Again Again**.
- Installing taps and kegs for beverage products, including non-alcoholic drinks.
- Improving customer access to tap water and phasing-out the retail of bottled water.
- Partnering chefs and baristas with suppliers and reusable serviceware providers to optimise trials of reusable packaging systems.

When commercial customers get behind reusable packaging systems, it creates a market for producers to move into this space and develop economically viable and efficiently run systems. Actions from these businesses can also create an amplified ripple effect as any new norms established between one supplier and outlet may motivate that supplier to replicate the system with other outlets they supply. Furthermore, the collective impact of even two or three outlets asking the same supplier about sourcing product in reusable packaging could be enough for that supplier to give it a go.

Working collectively would enable a system of peer support and knowledge sharing that would accelerate the transition for all outlets. A collective of businesses could also apply to the Councils or central government for funding to support the programme. Working collectively is also beneficial for 'de-risking' initiatives



like going single-use-cup-free because it removes the fear that an individual outlet that makes this move might lose customers to the business next-door. This collective approach has been seen in the **SUC-free Wānaka** initiative that has led to numerous cafes in the town feeling confident to stop dispensing disposable cups.

In these ways, hospitality and tourism outlets can act as ‘anchor customers’ that can shift business models toward more sustainable and innovative models. For example, several interviewees who operate B2B returnable packaging referred to having interacted with **Cardrona Ski Resort** in Otago, who actively seeks out suppliers that operate reuse systems. Although the resort is in Otago, its procurement stance is creating the possibility for suppliers to begin exploring, developing and trialling B2B reusable packaging systems. The potential to foster the emergence of a local ‘anchor customer’ for reusable packaging in the Nelson-Tasman hospitality/tourism community is an opportunity for the region.

“Nelson is full of cafes – if you could get 20 cafes to say “hey we are going to try and monitor our waste and see where we can get rid of or reuse things” then that would provide me with a market for my product in reusable packaging. I’d love to get other food and beverage companies on board as well.”

—Producer interviewee 2022

“Just encourage your supplier businesses to offer reusable packaging, or ring around other suppliers and see who is offering this. The more people who inquire, the more likely that they will think about switching their packaging. That’s a role we see ourselves and other hospo businesses playing – if we can, we should at least ask.”

—Hospitality interviewee 2022

3. RETAILERS: ACTIVELY ENCOURAGE AND FACILITATE REUSABLES WITH YOUR SUPPLIERS AND YOUR CUSTOMERS

Mainstream grocery retailers like supermarkets could make an impact by troubleshooting how to integrate an increased reusable packaging system offering into their stores. Several interviewees felt that without supermarket participation, reusable packaging won't be viable for most producers or consumers. While independent grocers in the Nelson-Tasman region are doing the majority of the heavy lifting in relation to returnable packaging and refill by bulk dispenser systems, mainstream supermarkets could do more. Achieving this could potentially involve a partnership with local producers in the region to develop innovative reuse systems that work within a supermarket context.

Those retailers already invested in reusable packaging (of which there is a reasonably large network in Nelson-Tasman), could optimise their reusable packaging offerings through efforts to more visibly and proactively encourage customers to bring their own bags and containers for refilling, through:

- signage and other promotional channels
- rewarding customers who remember to BYO
- charging for the use of new/single-use bags, bottles and containers
- having a fleet of returnable reusable containers available at bulk dispensers for customers who do not bring their own.

In particular, we note that currently it is normal for single-use plastic or paper bags to be dispensed for free at bulk bins, while breweries and off-license liquor stores sell brown plastic PET bottles for filling at taps. These items could theoretically be reused, but no system exists to encourage this. In fact, reuse is not adequately incentivised because bags are free and the purchase price for new bottles is relatively low.

There are some grocery stores around New Zealand that accept customer donations of upcycled jars, sanitise them and then make them available for customers at the bulk bins for free, instead of single-use bags. For example, **Hopper Refill** in Wellington, **Bin Inn Masterton**, **Shop Without Packaging** in Raglan, and **Le Bocal** in Balclutha. A regional system for encouraging glass jar drop offs for sanitisation and reuse at bulk bin stores could be pursued by retailers.

Similarly, some breweries in other parts of the country have chosen to remove the PET option and instead sell more durable reusable flagons like glass or metal at a higher price that creates an incentive to reuse (e.g. **Mount Brewing Co** in Tauranga). Others are implementing bottle swap initiatives that enable customers to borrow and return a reusable flagon – such as **Garage Project** in Wellington (using the **Again Again** tracing app) and **Good George** in Hamilton (using a deposit system). The newly-opened **Everyday Wine** wine-on-tap initiative at **Arden Porta Via** in Nelson uses branded swing-top wine bottles that cost \$3, which could be a strong enough incentive to drive customers to reuse the bottles. This pricing model could be replicated at other off-licence stores with taps.

Finally, retailers can continue to be proactive in the conversations they have with suppliers to request B2B returnable packaging systems, and to seek out more products that come in B2C returnable packaging. In this respect, the independent retailers in the region could consider the potential of formally or informally associating in order to increase influence and buying power both inside and outside the region to optimise and strengthen reusable packaging systems (both B2B and B2C). **Sustain Aotearoa: Independent Zero Waste Grocers** is an example of such an informal association.

“We need to figure out how to create consumer change. Supermarkets are the logical place because that’s where people go. Getting supermarkets to bring more refillables on board would be huge.”

– Producer interviewee 2022

4. COURIERS/POSTAL SERVICE: HELP TO GET REUSABLE PACKAGING FROM A TO B

As noted in the barriers section, the return logistics of reusable packaging systems can often be prohibitively expensive and complicated.

Almost every business we interviewed highlighted the difference that could be made if courier providers or NZ Post were to formally support both B2B and B2C reusable packaging systems through reduced rates for container returns, or the establishment or servicing of a network of packaging return points across the region. Some interviewees also thought that courier services could be proactive in offering and operating a reusable courier bag system.

5. COLLECTIVE ACTION ACROSS BUSINESSES AND INDUSTRY: WORK TOGETHER TO FILL INFRASTRUCTURE/SERVICE GAPS AND ADVOCATE FOR PRO-REUSE POLICIES

As with Council, businesses and industry groups can play a role in advocating for supportive reuse policies and initiatives at the local and central government level. Currently, several legislative and policy proposals for packaging present opportunities to develop a more favourable economic environment for reusables. These include regulated product stewardship for single-use plastic packaging, single-use plastic phase-outs and related policy decisions around coffee cups, and the proposed beverage container return scheme.

Appendix 3 also details specific policy measures central government could take to drive more reuse.

When industry voices call for packaging policy that foregrounds reusables, it shows Government they have a mandate to act in this direction. Earlier this year, the **Chia Sisters** led a group submission on the Government's proposed beverage container return scheme, calling for an enhanced focus on reusable beverage packaging, not just more recycling. This submission garnered support from a number of other businesses around the country, as well as national organisations like the **Sustainable Business Network**³⁰. There is the potential to build on this type of advocacy work, to continue to show local and central government that there are members of the business community who support reusable packaging.

In addition, businesses can also work together to front-foot packaging policy decisions by building out reuse initiatives in practice. Where capital and an excuse to collaborate is needed, industry groups could consider working towards joint applications to central government funds such as the **Waste Minimisation Fund** and the **Plastics Innovation Fund**. Such applications are more likely to be successful and achieve regional impact if they are collaborative within industries or across supply chains.



6. ENDNOTES AND APPENDICES

6.1 | Endnotes

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6.2 | Appendices

APPENDIX 1



Hannah Blumhardt (2022) Reusable Packaging in Aotearoa - getting back to the future

Chapter 1.1 Setting the scene - What is reusable packaging and why is it important?

https://reuseaotearoa.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/RA-June-22-1.1-Setting-the-scene_.pdf

Above report sections published by Reuse Aotearoa June 2022. Full report details:

Hannah Blumhardt (2022) Reusable Packaging in Aotearoa - getting back to the future: The state of play today, barriers to growth, opportunities for innovation, and recommendations for action (Reuse Aotearoa: June 2022). https://reuseaotearoa.org.nz/reusable_packaging_aotearoa_report_june22/.

APPENDIX 2



Hannah Blumhardt (2022) Reusable Packaging in Aotearoa - getting back to the future

Chapter 2.1 Sector snapshot - Hospitality, tourism and accommodation

https://reuseaotearoa.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/RA-June-22_2.1-Hospitality-tourism--hospitality.pdf

APPENDIX 3



Hannah Blumhardt (2022) Reusable Packaging in Aotearoa - getting back to the future

Chapter 3.3 Taking action - Recommended actions for central government to support growth of reusable packaging

https://reuseaotearoa.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/RA-June-22_3.3-Recommended-actions-for-central-government.pdf