

Starter story



The following account is an extract from a story in The Guardian Newspaper. They sent some of their writers to different supermarkets to investigate excess and unnecessary packaging. The writers rushed around and gathered up some of the 'worst offenders', proceeded to the checkout and removed the excess packaging at the till. Here's what happened at one of the supermarkets...

Fruit and vegetables are pretty bad; there is plenty of needless shrink-wrapping of cucumbers, broccoli and even cabbages, for example, and why exactly does corn on the cob have to come on a polystyrene tray, covered in plastic?

I grab a few of the worst offenders and head for the checkout.

I slip the cardboard wrapping off the hummus and the ready-cooked rice. The woman at the till asks again if I'm sure I wouldn't like a bag. I politely decline and get to work on unwrapping my ludicrously over packaged herbs.

At this point a woman in an orange body warmer glides over and asks me if I could "not do that here please". "I'm just taking the packaging off," I reply.

"Can you not do that please," she says again, this time a little forcefully.

"I won't be a minute," I say, hopefully.

I hear the tutting from the people in the queue. "If you don't stop I'm going to have to get the manager," says the woman in the body warmer. The people queuing are now shuffling from one foot to the other and rolling their eyes at each other, united in their disdain for the mad woman in front.

I carry on unwrapping. By the time I have finished, a heap of plastic and cardboard sits on the till, a sizeable amount given that I've spent less than £10. I hop it, before the manager has arrived.

Story adapted from 'The government told us to do it'
Wednesday November 15, 2006, The Guardian Newspaper
(<http://www.guardian.co.uk/g2/story/0,,1947815,00.html>)