



Submitted by: Allan Reetz, areetz@coopfoodstore.com

Company/Organization: Hanover Co-op Food Stores

Type of organization: Business

Number of Employees: 360

Category: environment

Challenge or Opportunity:

Produce boxes are made of corrugated cardboard completely coated in wax to make the cardboard marginally more resistant to moisture from wet produce coming direct from farm fields. Wear and tear takes a toll after a few uses. Dirty, soggy boxes cannot be cleaned and are prone to failing under the stress of normal use. Nor can they be recycled.

Approach or Solution:

Heavy duty plastic crates could provide a durable solution to transporting most produce to our stores, but the cost was more than five-times the cost of a wax-coated box. So, we subsidized 75 percent of the \$6.25 cost-per-crate making it doable for our farmers to risk a small investment with the promise of multiple benefits.

Impact:

Research confirms that reusable crate systems use 39 percent less energy than a corrugated cardboard boxes and generate 95 percent less solid waste. Over the 10 years of this program, landfill waste reduction is likely more than 8,000 boxes, while the estimated cash savings for farmers is about \$15,000. It is better for farms and the environment.