Suggested Environmental Considerations for Dietary Plastic Kits

The suggested environmental disclosure questions may be used in your RFI/RFP to help inform your purchasing decisions. Dietary plastic kits may include cutlery, straws, paper napkins and seasonings. However, not all of the questions are applicable for all products. For questions or comments, email GSC@practicegreenhealth.org.

#	Topic	Environmental Questions	Preferred Answer	Definition	Rationale
1.	Compostability	Is this product certified as "commercially" compostable (i.e., does it meet ASTM D6400 or D6868, DIN EN 13432, AS 4376, or ISO 17088) or is this a paper product approved for commercial composting (i.e., Cedar Grove approved or other reputable commercial composting facility)? (Yes/No)	Yes, if composting is available	Certified compostable means the product will fully and safely biodegrade in a commercial-scale compost facility in a specific number of days. If you're purchasing food service ware that contains biobased plastic, look for products that are certified by one or more of the following organizations: Biodegradable Products Institute (BPI) or Green Seal (USA), Din Certo (European Union), AIB Vincotte Inter (Belgium), Australian Environmental Labeling Association (Australia) or Biodegradable Bioplastics Association (Japan). BPI does not certify paper-based products unless they have a bioplastic liner. Some paper-based food service ware products contain a conventional plastic liner; these products may or may not be acceptable in commercial composting facilities. Cedar Grove is a commercial facility that tests and approves products. See product list, http://www.cedar-grove.com/acceptable/Accepted%20List.asp	It is important that compostable food service ware products are used in a facility that has a designated composting facility or system in place that will accept compostable biobased food service ware to enable the recovery of both the food waste and the food service ware product.
2.	Packaging	Is this product offered either in bulk or are the individual wrappings recyclable (e.g., paperboard) or certified as compostable in a commercial composting facility? (Yes/No)	Yes	Sustainable packaging can take a number of forms but reduces waste and associated disposal or recycling costs.	Purchasing products in bulk form (rather than individually wrapped units) cuts down on waste.
3.	Packaging	Is this product packaged without	Yes	Polystyrene (CAS 9003-53-6) is a plastic polymer	Also referred to as 'PS' with the SPI

		polystyrene (PS, commonly referred to as Styrofoam™) and polyvinyl chloride (PVC)? (Yes/No)		from the monomer styrene. It comes in many forms: sheet, expanded or extruded foam, or as oriented polystyrene. What is commonly known as Styrofoam™ refers only to the extruded form of polystyrene. Packaging refers to all materials (primary, secondary, etc) used to transport and protect a product from damage. Alternatives to polystyrene packaging are available. Polyvinyl chloride (PVC) or "vinyl" is a plastic polymer used in a wide array of products. It is the third most widely produced plastic.	(Society of the Plastics Industry) resin code 6, polystyrene is difficult for hospitals to recycle and there are environmentally preferable alternatives. Polystyrene is made with styrene.[i] The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) classifies styrene as a possible carcinogen.[ii] Foam blowing agents (called hydrochlorofluorocarbons, HCFCs) used to make polystyrene foam are compounds that have an ozone depletion potential[iii]. Production and incineration of PVC releases dioxins and other harmful chemicals. Dioxins are widely distributed throughout the environment in low concentrations and are persistent, bioaccumulative and toxic (PBT). Dioxins are potent toxicants with many health impacts even at low exposure levels.
4.	Performance	Can at least 10 samples of this product be provided for testing upon request by member hospitals? (Yes/No)	Yes	Performance testing is an essential part of evaluating food ware.	Hospitals may want to performance test compostable food service ware to ensure that it does not leak, deform in hot water, or create sharp edges when broken.
5. (a)	Biobased	Does this product contain biobased content? (Yes/No/NA)	Yes/NA	Biobased content indicates the percentage of total carbon that is biobased in a bioplastic food service ware product or coating.	The benefit of biobased content is generally replaces content from petroleum based materials. However, biobased content does not mean the product is compostable or environmentally preferable unless other ingredients are known.
5.(b)	Biobased	If yes to 5(a), does this biobased plastic product contain at least 70% biobased carbon content based on ASTM D6866? (Yes/No) UNCOATED wood, bamboo and	Yes/NA	Biobased content indicates the percentage of total carbon that is biobased in a bioplastic food service ware product or coating. Companies may be asked to verify the biobased content (based on ASTM D6866) by providing laboratory test data or by showing certification of the biobased	It is important that these products are used in a facility that has a designated composting facility or system in place that will accept compostable biobased food service ware to enable recovery of food service ware as well as other

		other fiber-based materials automatically comply.		content by the USDA's BioPreferred Program, Vincotte's OK Biobased Program, or another third party certifier.	food waste from the facility.
6.	Recycled Content	Does this product contain recycled content? (Yes/No) If yes, what is the percentage of total and postconsumer recycled content?	Yes/Highest percentage meeting performanc e needs	Recycled content is the percentage of recovered material, including preconsumer and postconsumer materials that, at a minimum, meets the U.S. EPA's Comprehensive Procurement Guidelines, or contains at least 30% postconsumer content. Currently, there are a small number of disposable food service items that contain recycled content; these include paper plates, bowls and cups; and ancillary food service items such as coffee filters, napkins, tray liners and paper towels. Most food-contact products have only pre-consumer recycled content.	Buying recycled-content products ensures that the materials collected in recycling programs will be used again in the manufacture of new products. According to EPA, recommending postconsumer recycled content levels for items will have the most positive impact on reducing the amount of solid waste requiring disposal.[iv] Purchasers should prefer products with the highest postconsumer recycled content that also meet other considerations. Use of postconsumer recycled content is fundamental to closing the loop in the recycling process, using fewer natural resources, and based on EPA's ReCon Tool, can reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
7.	Manufacturing Process	Is this product unbleached or made without the use of chlorine or any chlorine derivatives? (Yes/No)	Yes	Up until the late 1990s, chlorine was the chemical of choice for bleaching paper in the kraft pulping process.[v] Chlorine and chlorine derivatives are used to "whiten" paper in paper making process. Unbleached paper typically does not use whitening agents. Some food service ware products are whitened with chlorine-free compounds such as hydrogen peroxide or ozone which are safer for workers and the environment.	Dioxins are formed when paper products are manufactured or bleached with chlorine or chlorinated compounds. They are widely distributed throughout the environment in low concentrations and are persistent, bioaccumulative and toxic (PBT). Dioxins are potent toxicants with many health impacts even at low exposure levels.
8.	Sourcing	Is this product certified as sustainably produced by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), Rainforest Alliance, USDA Organic, Protected Harvest or Fair Trade USA? (Yes/No) If yes, please indicate which one.	Yes	Although there is no single definition of sustainable agriculture or forestry, several independent third party organizations certify products that contain agricultural or forestry products that do not harm the environment, protects workers from exposure to highly toxic pesticides and other hazards, respects animals, provides a fair wage to the farmer, and supports and enhances rural communities.	Product ingredients may have been produced with synthetic pesticides and fertilizers, antibiotics, or added hormones. They may have been harvested in ways that contribute to habitat destruction, water pollution, displacement of indigenous peoples. Certification would avoid this.

Additional Desirable Criteria

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9.	Sourcing	Was this product grown without genetically modified organisms (GMOs)? (Yes/No)	Yes	This product was not made with materials that contain genetically engineered/ modified (GE/GM) organisms. Prefer products that are certified to be GMO-free. Acceptable certifications include Non-GMO Project Verified (www.nongmoproject.org), CERT ID Non-GMO or ProTerra Certifications (www.genetic-id.com/services/certification). Or products can be tested by GeneScan, Inc. (www.gmotesting.com), a laboratory which verifying that products do not contain GMOs.	Products that contain corn, soy, canola and their derivatives (e.g., oil, high-fructose corn syrup, corn meal, soy protein, etc) may have been produced from genetically modified seeds. GMO containing foods or ingredients are not adequately assessed for their credible adverse effects on human or animal health, or on the environment in which they are produced. Also of concern is the threat posed by genetic engineering to environmentally sustainable food production and to the economic livelihood of farmers pursing sustainable food production. See related fact sheet: http://www.noharm.org/lib/downloads/food/Genetic_Engineered_Food_Stmnt.pdf

Practice Greenhealth thanks its EPP Supporters for their contributions to the creation of this resource.

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[i] U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, "Air Toxics- Styrene," http://www.epa.gov/ttnatw01/hlthef/styrene.html, website viewed June 2011
[ii] Ibid
[iii] *Phaseout of HCFCs*, Ozone Layer Depletion, U.S. EPA, http://www.epa.gov/ozone/title6/phaseout/classtwo.html viewed September 2011
[iv] Background Document for the Final Comprehensive Procurement Guideline (CPG) III and Final Recovered Materials Advisory Notice (RMAN) III, U.S. EPA, September 1999, EPA530-R-00-002
[v] Chlorine Free Processing, Conservatree, http://www.conservatree.org/paper/PaperTypes/CFDisc.shtml, Accessed February 2012