Sports brand Puma detailed a new part of its sustainability strategy in April with an event at the Design Museum in London to unveil a concept called The Clever Little Bag.



S-Index to atone for past sins

Puma has widened the programme through which it aims to reduce waste and carbon emissions by moving away from traditional product packaging such as shoe-boxes and apparel polyethylene bags.

The new sustainable packaging and distribution system was created by a well-known Swiss born industrial designer, Yves Béhar. It consists of a box made from a single, folded piece of 100% recycled cardboard that will come into use in transportation, storage and display of Puma athletic shoes, and a re-usable red bag, in which consumers will carry off their new purchase, leaving the box behind to be recycled or re-used.

Puma says the initiative, which will go live in its supply chain with the autumn-winter 2011 collection, will enable the company to use each 65% less paper each year in its packaging, reduce its carbon emissions by 10,000 tonnes, and its use of plastic by 275,000 tonnes.

Mr Béhar said at a launch event in London in April that he had been happy to take on the project, especially as the brief was open, allowing him to examine exactly how far he could take the idea of reducing the contribution of packaging and distribution to what Puma calls its overall environmental 'paw-print'.

"Reinventing is hard," he said. "Reinventing the shoebox, which is what we have done here, almost, meant discovering a whole new world for me of distribution centres, and the back-rooms of stores." He said he believed The Clever

Nigerian footballer Chinedu Obasi at the launch of a special unity kit Puma introduced at the 2010 African Cup of Nations. As part of its S-Index, Puma will favour producers in Africa when sourcing cotton.

Puma



Puma claims to have reinvented the shoe box.
Puma

Little Bag concept would lead to a better retail experience for consumers. A quick fold inwards of the box, which he is sure retail staff will be able to learn to do easily, will make the re-usable bag look like it's lining the box. This will be a classy way to present customers with their new shoes. "It makes me think of high-class linens," he said.

A parallel part of the new packaging strategy is to reduce by half the amount of plastic that comes with a new Puma T-shirt. The company will achieve this by the simplest means imaginable: it will fold each T-shirt one extra time for the purposes of storing and displaying them. Another aspect of the overhaul of packaging will be to use 45% less paper in its hang-tags and for all of the paper it does use in them to be recycled.

New vision

"Often the simplest things take the longest time to create," said Puma chief executive, Jochen Zeitz. He explained that this new development had come after more than ten years of successful implementation of Puma's social and environmental standards (Puma Safe) and the introduction of its company initiative (Puma Vision) last year.

He said his company had changed its mission statement. It has had the stated aim for a number of years to be the most desirable sports lifestyle company in the world. To this, it has now added the word 'sustainable'. It has a vision of a better world, Mr Zeitz continued, and to achieve that vision it is committing itself to four key attributes: to be fair, honest, positive and creative.

The new packaging and distribution ideas that the company presented are linchpins of its wider sustainability strategy, Mr Zeitz said. That strategy also encompasses the choice of material it will use in its footwear and apparel collections. For example, it will insist that all the leather in its shoes is free of chromium VI, and it will favour sustainable wool and organic cotton for its clothing. If it uses regular cotton, it will favour producers from Africa in its approach to sourcing. Puma clothing will also contain recycled yarns, including recycled cotton, polypropylene and polyester. Another of its commitments is to encourage outsource manufacturing partners to accredit their production facilities under the bluesign system.

All of these ideas will combine to form a new Puma Sustainability Index (S-Index), which the chief executive said deliberately made a play on the word 'sin'. He explained: "We feel



Part of Puma's new sustainability initiative is to reduce by half the amount of plastic that comes with a new Puma T-shirt.
Puma



Puma chief executive, Jochen Zeitz (right) with industrial designer Yves Béhar at the launch event for The Clever Little Bag in April.

Puma

responsible for our sins. We have to face the reality that our company, and our industry, are not [environmentally and ecologically] sustainable yet. Business is part of the problem. So, at the very least, we have to find ways of being less unsustainable. This is no longer negotiable."

Using the S-Index, he said Puma would commit to making 50% of its international footwear and apparel collections sustainably by 2015. In the process, he said the company would reduce by 25% the amount of energy and water it uses and the amount of carbon and waste it emits. It will also reduce by 75% the amount of paper it uses across the business. Some of the measures will already be in place for the production of the brand's spring-summer 2011 collections.

"The long-term plan is to give back to the environment what we take out of it," Mr Zeitz said, "to have a neutral paw-print. When it comes to corporate social responsibility, this is just the beginning. The mission we have set ourselves is ambitious, but we have no choice but to believe it if we believe in a better world. These next five years will be very exciting."

Shared resource

Jochen Zeitz has said that Puma would be happy to share the details of its S-Index criteria with any company that wants to have the information and put in place a similar plan for its own supply chain. He believes the information is sorely needed in this industry, saying: "How do you define a sustainable product? There is no standard. There is just this free-floating measurement so that brands can apply a 'sustainable product' label without having to make any improvements. If anybody would like to use the S-Index, we are happy to share. The industry has been unable to come up with a standard so far. Others have them, but have not made their criteria public. We are making ours public and, in doing so, we hope to open up the dialogue."

He realises that Puma can't speak for the whole sports industry, but insists that, as no real industry-wide initiative has developed on standards, S-Index may well lead to something further reaching than just his company's supply chain. "This is a very competitive industry," the chief executive says, "but brands do not need to compete on sustainability; it's one area in which we should all be co-operating. You see car-makers co-operating to create joint platforms, so why shouldn't we co-operate too, even if not to that extent? Only time will tell if our competitors want to use the S-Index to measure their own sustainability efforts, but we are willing to let them."

PUMA S-INDEX

Footwear	Apparel	Accessories	Yellow Label Producs	Packaging
Designed to reduce materials / use >50% sustainable materials Zero use of harmful substances (RSL) Dyeing, washing, printing according to best practice Produced in factory with puma.safe rating A to B+	Designed to reduce materials / use >50% sustainable materials Zero use of harmful substances (RSL) Dyeing, washing, printing according to best practice Produced in factory with puma.safe rating A to B+	Designed to reduce materials / use >50% sustainable materials Zero use of harmful substances (RSL) Dyeing, washing, printing according to best practice Produced in factory with puma.safe rating A to B+	Designed to reduce materials / use >50% sustainable materials Zero use of harmful substances (RSL) Dyeing, washing, printing according to best practice Produced in sustain-able factory Contribution to PUMAVision Fund	Designed to reduce materials / use >100% sustainable materials Zero use of harmful substances Eco-friendly printing
Sustainable materials • Organic cotton • Recycled PET • Recycled cotton • Chromium VI leather • Recycled rubber • Natural rubber • Bio EVA • Bio PU/ TPU	**Sustainable materials** • Organic cotton • Cotton Made in Africa • Recycled PES • Tencel • Modal • Recycled PA • Recycled PP • Linen • Wool • PLA fibre • Bamboo • Hemp	**Sustainable materials** • Organic cotton • Recycled PP • Fair Trade • Recycled cotton	**Sustainable materials** • See boxes on the left	**Sustainable materials** • Recycled paper • Biodegradable materials • Organic cotton • Recycled fibres

Note: Sustainable materials in use for S/S 2011 styles highlighted in red.