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**When It Comes to Sustainability, Less is More:**

*New Study Indicates That the Amount of Plastic in a Package  
Can Be More Important Than the Source of the Plastic*

(December 11, 2006 – Rochester, MI) Much is being made of the need to create packaging that is considered to be environmentally sustainable, therefore producing benefits for the economy without creating problems for the ecology. A new, independent life cycle study, commissioned by the Athena Institute and reviewed by *The ULS Report*, indicates that many of the sustainability claims to which the public is being exposed are not supported by the facts.

The study examined the energy used, waste created, and greenhouse gas emissions generated by a number of common packages made from plastic, including drink cups, water bottles, and meat trays. Packages that were made from traditional plastics such as PET, polypropylene, and polystyrene, were compared to the same packages made from polylactic acid (PLA), a plastic that is produced from corn, rather than from petroleum. The study covered all process steps beginning with production of raw materials (growing corn for PLA or extracting crude oil and natural gas as feedstocks for traditional plastics) and continued through all processing, transportation, and fabrication steps to arrive at a finished packaging product.

While the public's expectation is that packages made from PLA are more environmentally sustainable, the research did not support this. The data show that packages which weigh less often use less energy and produce less waste, regardless of whether they are made from petroleum or corn-based plastic.

According to Bob Lilienfeld, Editor of *The ULS Report* and an acknowledged expert on waste prevention, "This study illustrates that one of the keys to increased sustainability revolves around minimizing packaging weight and not worrying about whether the plastic involved is made from renewable or non-renewable resources. It's like the old paper vs. plastic debate. In the end, the package that weighs less is usually the best choice for the wallet and the environment."

*The ULS Report* was published on a regular basis between 1994 and 2000. Editor Bob Lilienfeld, who co-authored the book *Use Less Stuff: Environmental Solutions for Who We Really Are*, is in the process of re-launching the report. The full archive is available at [www.use-less-stuff.com](http://www.use-less-stuff.com).

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