

2021

Premium  
pet food  
purchaser  
**SURVEY  
RESULTS**

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Trends,  
behaviors  
and insights  
pet food  
manufacturers  
can leverage  
to convert  
consumers



## White Paper



## Consumer insights for premium pet food packaging

### Research Objective:

To better understand how packaging drives purchase in premium pet food and understand consumer interest trends in the premium pet food category since 2019.

### Executive Summary:

Given the significant increase in pet ownership driven by the COVID pandemic, Mondy and Dow partnered with Weave Insights, a professional market research firm, to measure changes in perceptions and behaviors since 2019.

The result of the research conducted in this study, in addition to the outcomes of comparing 2020's research to the 2019 research, resulted in several significant conclusions. Here are the top five key takeaways, which will be addressed in this white paper.

### Top 5 Key Takeaways:

- ▶ packaging features that are most important to consumers
- ▶ packaging aesthetics, labeling and readability are critical to purchasers
- ▶ how consumers view sustainability in premium pet food packaging
- ▶ new pet owners desire different features from pet food packaging
- ▶ behavior changes since 2019, during and after the COVID pandemic

*This white paper is based on the survey's findings, providing insights and implications of the research as well as highlighting recommendations for improved product positioning.*

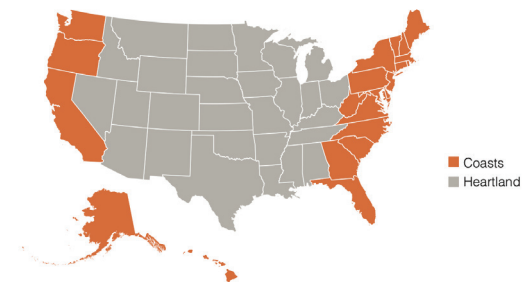
## Outlining new market trends, behaviors and insight, premium pet food packaging manufacturers can leverage to convert customers.

This research addresses the following four key questions with a goal of exploring and understanding the impact the pandemic has had on the premium pet food packaging industry:

- ▶ *What drives premium pet food purchases and what has changed?*
- ▶ *How does sustainability factor into premium pet food packaging, and what has changed?*
- ▶ *How have shopping behaviors changed since 2019?*
- ▶ *How have premium pet food buyers changed since 2019?*

To answer each of these questions, both qualitative and quantitative research methods were applied, including surveying 751 premium pet food buyers from a cross-section of demographic and socioeconomic categories. Purchasing channels (online vs. retail) and product preferences (ease of use vs. sustainability vs. aesthetic factors) were also represented.

Geographically, 54% of research participants live on the U.S. East or West Coasts, while 46% live in America's "Heartland."



### Methodology and Participant Data

To take part in the survey, participants underwent a screening process before taking the survey. To qualify, participants must currently own a dog or cat, have purchased premium dry pet food within the past month, describe their purchase channels and live in the United States.

Those who made it through the qualifying round took a 13-minute online quantitative survey, asking questions about their premium pet food buying habits. Whenever possible, 2019 research was compared to show trends and changes.

In total, 751 qualified premium pet food purchasers were surveyed. As for where the participants shop for premium pet food, 121 shop online, 204 in specialty pet stores and 414 in grocery stores/mass merchandisers/shopping clubs.

The research and results focus on understanding consumer interest trends in the premium pet food category since 2019.

## Audience Engagement

Pets continue to hold a special place in the hearts of consumers:

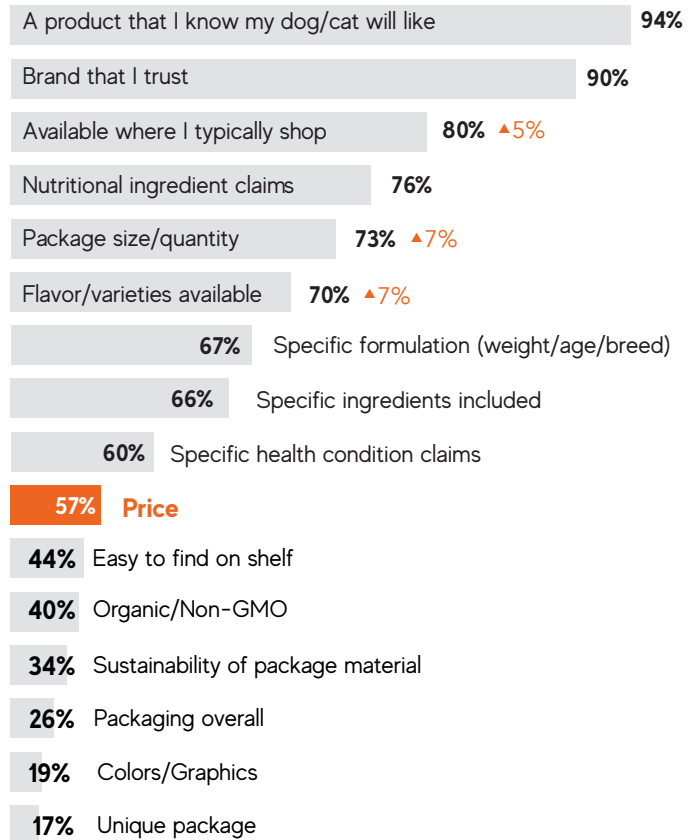


## Findings & Analysis: Brand Drivers

Product is still top priority of pet owners. While the need for freshness and convenience in premium pet food has not changed, pet preference and brand trust continue to be most important in choosing a pet food brand.

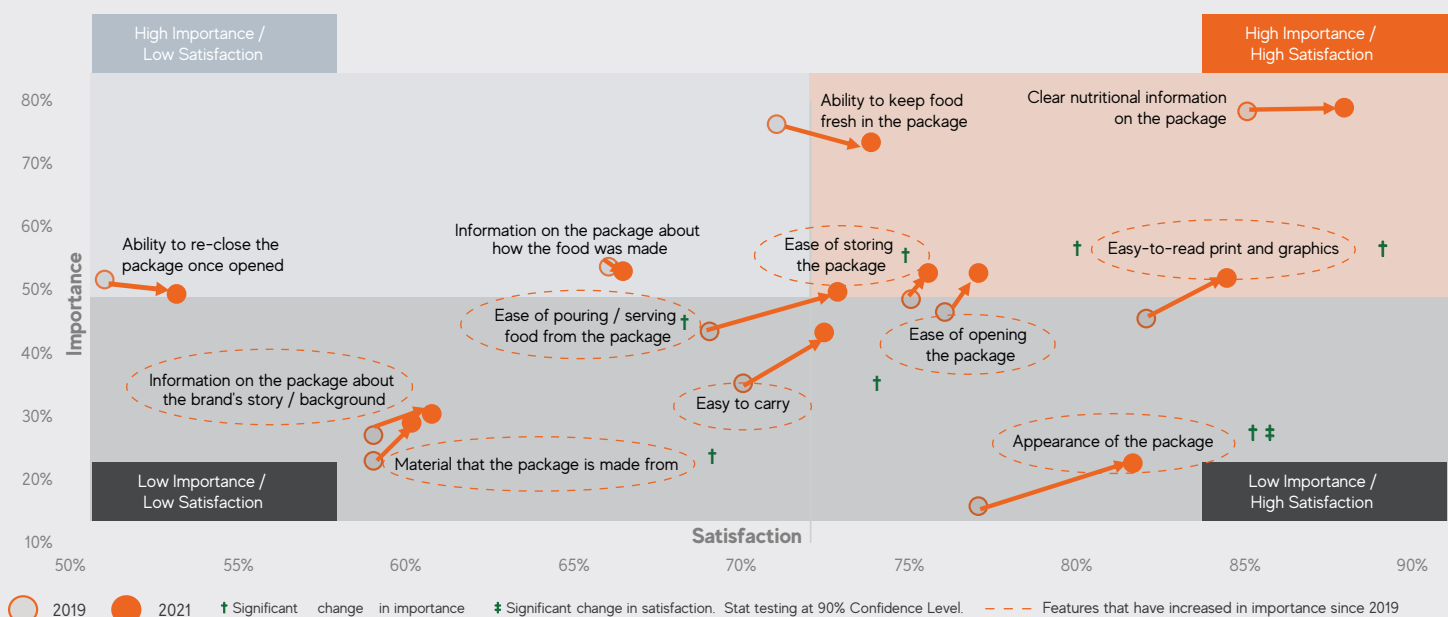
When asked by respondents to indicate which brand drivers were "extremely/very important," nine categories were above price.

## Brand Drivers



▲Significant change since 2019

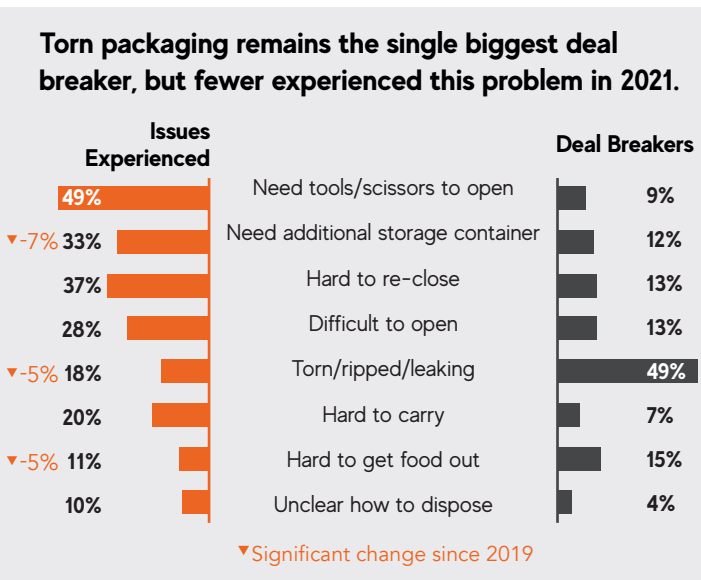
## Findings & Analysis: Increasingly Important Packaging Features



## Shopping Habits: Freshness and Ease of Use vs. Deal Breakers

Freshness enabled by packaging still poses the biggest overall opportunity to delight consumers. The quad graph below shows eight features that have increased in importance since 2019: information on the package about the brand's story/background, material that the package is made from, ease of pouring/serving food from the package, easy to carry, ease of storing the package, ease of opening the package, appearance of the package, and easy-to-read print and graphics.

Torn packaging remains the single biggest deal breaker when choosing premium pet food, with 49% of participants stating torn, ripped or leaking packages is a concern.



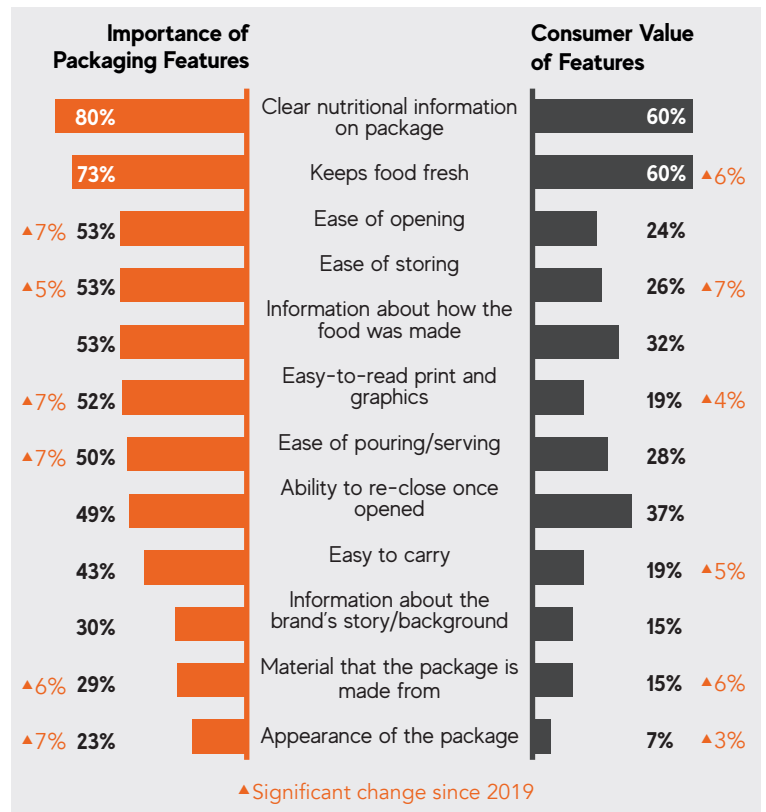
## Findings & Analysis: Packaging Features

When participants were asked how important each packaging feature was to them when choosing a particular brand of pet food, 80% of participants found clear nutritional information extremely important, while 73% looked for packaging that would keep food fresh for their pet. Also important to note is the percentage of increase from 2019 to 2021 in ease of opening (7%), ease of storing (5%), ease of serving (7%) and ease to carry (8%).

The right side of the chart shows the results of asking participants which of the features would be important enough to them that they would continue buying a pet food brand with that feature, even if it cost more than other brands. Most of the significant changes since 2019 are

related to use of the packaging (keeps food fresh, stores easily, easy to carry, etc.).

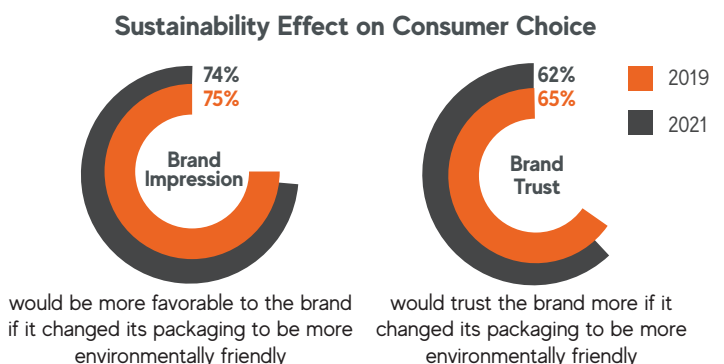
This chart can be used by brand owners to consider potential improvements in premium pet food packaging.



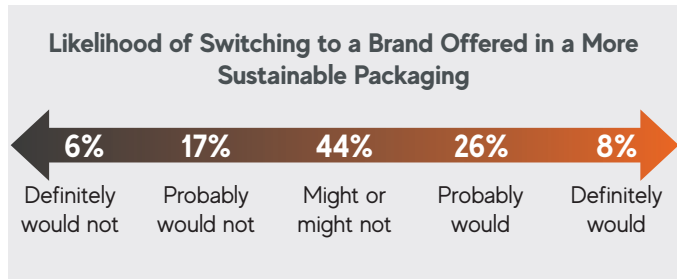
## Findings & Analysis: Sustainability Impact

While sustainability continues to be a lower driver of purchase, impact on brand image is positive, with recyclability providing a key indicator of sustainability.

In 2021, 74% of respondents would be more favorable to the brand if it changed packaging to be more environmentally friendly. And, 62% would trust the brand more.

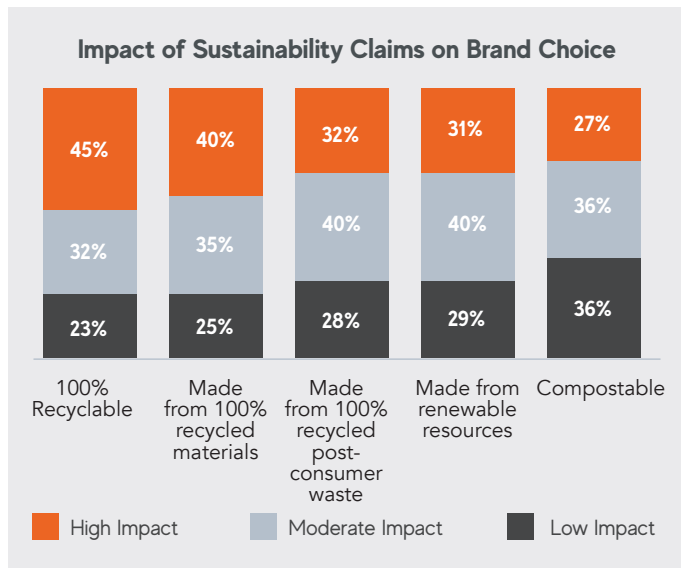


As in 2019, about one in three premium pet food buyers saw sustainability as important enough to switch to other brands, with younger consumers even more likely to switch. Generation Z and Millennial consumers place significant importance on sustainability and are more likely to switch to a brand with sustainable packaging. Recyclability remains the most associated indicator of sustainability.



Recyclable messaging carries the highest weight with premium pet food buyers.

45% of buyers said seeing “100% recyclable” on packaging has high impact when choosing a brand of dry pet food. “Made from recycled materials” came in second with 40%, followed by “Made from 100% recycled post-consumer waste” at 32%, “Made from renewable resources” at 31% and “compostable” at 27%.

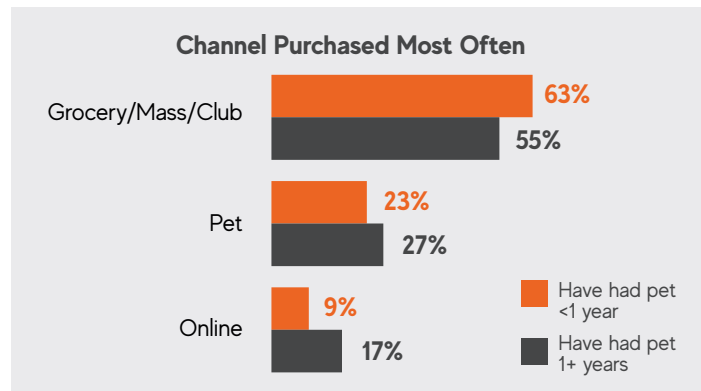


### Findings & Analysis: Changes in Shopping Behavior

In this study conducted during the pandemic, shopping has shifted towards one-stop shopping mass merchandisers, especially for new pet owners. Buyers in the mass

merchandise channel are practical and value convenience and sustainability.

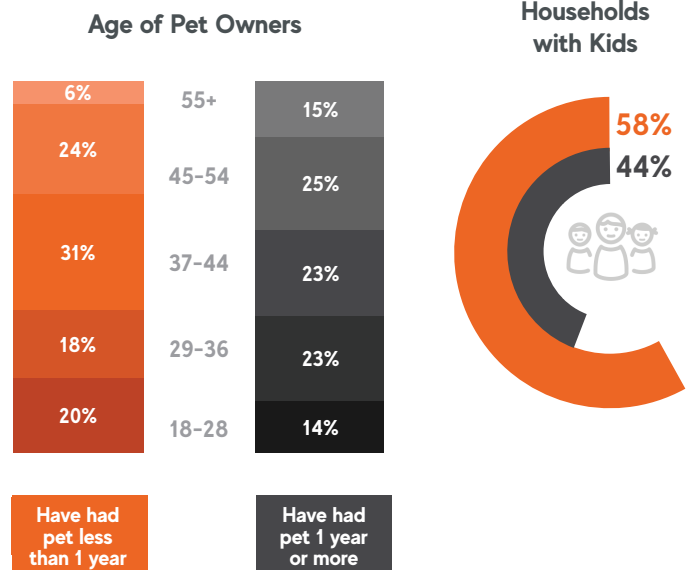
The pandemic has encouraged more one-stop shopping, with big box pet stores suffering. Smaller, independent pet stores hold their own, with consumers showing greater awareness about supporting local businesses during COVID.



In addition, mass merchandiser consumers (64%) place more trust in brands with sustainable packaging and would likely switch to a brand with sustainable packaging (42%).

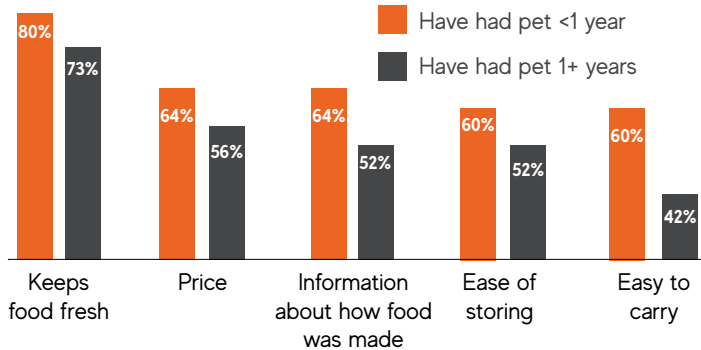
### Findings & Analysis: Impact of New Pet Owners

During the COVID pandemic, research shows younger people and younger families found the time at home to be a great time to get a pet, resulting in high rates of adoption. Of those surveyed, one out of eight reported having their pet less than a year. In 2021, 31% of new pet owners were between the ages 37-44. In addition, 58% of new pet owners have children.



Research shows that new pet owners are more price conscious and practical, looking to packaging cues as guides. Of those who have had their pet less than a year, 80% value freshness, and 64% value both price and information on how the food was made.

### Importance of Packaging Features



### Findings & Analysis: COVID-19's Influence

Since 2019, premium pet food buyers have not changed dramatically overall. However, pandemic pet owners are younger and are more impacted by sustainable packaging and package graphics.

When comparing willingness to spoil and spend more on pets, 91% of pet owners who have had their pet more than a year said it's worth spending a little more for quality pet food versus 86% of those who have had their pet less than a year. However, 86% of new pet owners said they seek out solutions to make life easier versus 79%. In addition, new pet owners are more likely to try new products (72% versus 66%).

Ranking at the top of what new pet owners are concerned about is package recyclability. 41% of respondents are likely to switch brands to a more sustainably packaged pet food.



For those who have had their pet more than a year, 33% said icons and logos showing recyclability makes a high impact, 28% said the ability to recycle packaging at bag collection points is important, and 28% said certifications and logos for sustainable manufacturing made an impact on their purchasing decision.

### Research Insights: Key Takeaways

#### What's changed since 2019?

**Package Features:** Importance of ease of use and aesthetic factors have both increased.

While the need for freshness and convenience in premium pet food hasn't changed, the importance of packaging features has increased, with new pet owners especially placing greater importance on package features, including the ability to re-close the package, ease of pouring/serving food from the package and ease of opening the package.

**Sustainability:** The impact of sustainable packaging on brand equity and trust remains high. In addition, packaging recyclability provides a key indicator of sustainability to consumers. Recyclability has a higher impact on new pet owners, possibly because they're younger.

**Premium Buyer Profile:** Some differences emerged among newer pet owners, as higher rates of adoption during the pandemic resulted in younger pet owners. In fact, one out of eight premium pet food buyers sampled reported having their pets for less than a year.

Premium pet food buyers haven't changed dramatically overall, but pandemic pet owners are younger, looking for practical packaging features to guide choice, and are more impacted by sustainable packaging.

### About Mondi North America

Mondi is a global leader in premium packaging and paper with more than 100 key brands and has 30+ years of direct experience manufacturing in the United States. We strive to provide our clients and their customers with innovative features and sustainable packaging solutions that keep production smooth and efficient. We are fully integrated across the packaging and paper value chain – from managing forests and producing pulp paper and plastic films to developing and manufacturing effective industrial applications. We offer unmatched, state-of-the-

art printing and recycling technology. Our approach is simple.

- ▶ We develop close relationships with customers.
- ▶ We listen to their needs and challenges.
- ▶ We share what we've learned.
- ▶ We make good on our promises.

### About DOW

Dow (NYSE: DOW) combines global breadth, asset integration and scale, focused innovation and leading business positions to achieve profitable growth. The Company's ambition is to become the most innovative, customer centric, inclusive and sustainable materials science company, with a purpose to deliver a sustainable future for the world through our materials science expertise and collaboration with our partners.

Dow's portfolio of plastics, industrial intermediates, coatings and silicones businesses delivers a broad range of differentiated science-based products and solutions for its customers in high-growth market segments, such as packaging, infrastructure, mobility and consumer care. Dow operates 106 manufacturing sites in 31 countries and employs approximately 35,700 people. Dow delivered sales of approximately \$39 billion in 2020. References to Dow or the Company mean Dow Inc. and its subsidiaries. For more information, please visit [www.dow.com](http://www.dow.com) or follow @DowNewsroom on Twitter.

**Total solutions, not just products, distinguish us from others.** Learn more about Mondi's products and solutions: <https://NorthAmerica.MondiGroup.com>

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# SUSTAINABLE PACKAGING INNOVATIONS



## FlexiBag Recyclable:

- ▶ Partnership with Presto Products - FreshLock Zipper
- ▶ Approved for the How2Recycle Store Drop-off Program
- ▶ Available in flat, rolled glue and pinch bottom

## FlexiBag Recycle Handle:

- ▶ Recycle Ready
- ▶ Easy to Carry Handle
- ▶ Available in rolled glue and pinch bottom



## FlexiBag in Box:

- ▶ Ready to Ship
- ▶ Recycle Ready
- ▶ Continuous branding through use experience
- ▶ Utilizes current fill lines with no alterations
- ▶ Available in flat, rolled glue and pinch bottom

For more information, email [contact.jackson@mondijackson.com](mailto:contact.jackson@mondijackson.com).

SUSTAINABLE *by* DESIGN

[northamerica.mondigroup.com](http://northamerica.mondigroup.com)