Reading

Reading Passage 1

You should spend about 20 minutes on **Questions 1 - 13**, which are based on Reading Passage 1.

Packaging-free shops may tackle plastic but risk increasing food waste

Shops that let you bring your own containers aim to tackle the plastic packaging scourge, but they may not be the perfect solution

A. Supermarkets are full of food, but they are also full of packaging: cereal bagged in plastic sits inside a cardboard box, cucumbers are shrink-wrapped with care. Now trendy packaging-free shops are popping up in Europe and North America where you bring your own containers and buy exactly as much as you need. While the trend started with small, local shops, even retail giants are getting in on the action. Waitrose, one of the UK's biggest grocery store chains, is trialing a packaging-free section in one of its Oxford stores. The switch is driven largely by a desire to make shopping more environmentally friendly. "We have made good progress in reducing our use of unnecessary plastics and packaging and this test is designed to help us identify ways for us to build on that," says a Waitrose spokesperson.

B. Consumers are increasingly aware of the environmental impacts of packaging, particularly plastic waste that can end up in the ocean, hurt wildlife and even work its way back up the food chain and onto your plate. According to data from the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), almost 30 million tonnes of containers and packaging were sent to landfill in the US in 2015. Back then, more than 10 million tonnes of that amount was plastic, which can take hundreds of years to break down.

C. "People want to know what they can do," says Rachelle Strauss, the founder of UK waste-reduction consultancy Zero Waste Week. Packaging-free stores help us feel like we have the ability to make at least a small change, she says. But it isn't clear whether, as a whole, they will actually have a positive environmental impact, or if they are just aspirational marketing. "If we could do without packaging, it wouldn't be here," says Susan

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Selke, director of Michigan State University's School of Packaging. Companies would gladly rid themselves of the expense if they could, she says.

D. Perhaps the most obvious use of food packaging is branding and information about the product, but you could do that with less packaging than is used now. A far more crucial purpose of packaging is to keep food safe from contamination and lengthen its shelf life – those shrink-wrapped cucumbers will wrinkle and squish in a few days if left out. EPA data shows that more than 30 million tonnes of food waste was sent to US landfills in 2015. "The carbon footprint of food is so much bigger than the carbon footprint of the package," says Nina Goodrich, director of the Sustainable Packaging Coalition. That means that any increase in food waste will quickly wipe out any gains from cutting out packaging. "The consumer might not be aware of that because the package waste is more visible."

E. It is also important to remember that the packaging you see isn't the whole story. "People tend to think of packaging as what they take stuff home in, but that's not all," says Selke. "If you truly had a no-packaging grocery store, then you would never be able to get the products to it, and the consumers would never be able to get them home." That is why paying attention to the supply chain is crucial: even nominally packaging-free stores receive their goods in some sort of packaging, and eliminating that is probably impossible. Selling in bulk may help reduce that waste, though, as one enormous sack of beans emptied into a steel bin is less wasteful than lots of smaller bags taken home with each customer.

F. "Our supply chain is almost completely different from a standard grocery store," says Brianne Miller, founder of packaging-free store Nada in Vancouver, Canada. If regular grocery stores were to attempt to transition to package-free items, they would struggle, as a vast majority of their business models aren't set up for that, she says.

G. One supply-chain issue is simple demand. "A lot of what's got us into this situation is our demand for convenience and our privilege of having strawberries all year round," says Strauss. "We've become accustomed to all of this convenience, and it's having a cost now on the environment." Shops wanting to reduce their environmental impact will need customers who are happy to buy what is in season. They would also need to keep less stock to reduce food waste, says Miller, so consumers would have to get used to a store sometimes being out of an ingredient they are looking for. The cost of changing the supply chain so dramatically can be high, especially when a store takes into account factors

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beyond environmental impact, like the labour practices of food producers. “A very socially and environmentally responsibly sourced low-carbon-footprint rice is going to be more expensive,” says Miller. That means packaging-free stores are often too expensive for some people. There can also be other accessibility issues, says Susan Berry, CEO of consulting firm Disability Smart Solutions. Immunocompromised people and those with severe food allergies face issues in a world without packaging, as food safety becomes much more difficult. Self-serving can also challenge those with limited mobility, dexterity and upper body strength. “I think it’s a big issue for people with disabilities to reach into the bin and get their own food,” says Berry. “There’s a huge population that will have difficulty.”

H. The solution, says Berry, is probably hiring more staff so that someone is always available to help. Despite being smaller than most chain supermarkets, Nada has about the same number of staff members, says Miller. That includes staff to deal with the multiple daily deliveries from local food producers, to make sure customers have the help they need and are using clean containers, and even a chef to turn food that would otherwise be wasted into prepared meals and condiments.

Questions 1-5

Do the following statements agree with the information given in **Reading Passage 1**?

In boxes 1-5 on your answer sheet, write

TRUE	if the statement agrees with the information
FALSE	if the statement contradicts the information
NOT GIVEN	if there is no information on this

1. Packing-free stores have become popular in Europe and North America for a very long time.
2. Consumers still have low awareness of harmful effects that plastic packaging has on the environment.
3. Nowadays, plastics account for roughly one third of the total amount of waste in landfill.
4. It is unsure whether packaging - free shops will indeed help to protect the environment or not.

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5. The most recognizable role of packaging is to advertise and provide customers with details about the product.

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Questions 6-10

Looking at the following statements (Questions 6-10) and the list of people's names below.

Match each statement with the correct person, **A-E**

Write the correct letter, **A-E**, in boxes 6-10 on your answer sheet.

6. There will be challenges for handicapped people to access the food in free-packing stores.
7. Packaging plays an indispensable role in the delivery of products from and to shops.
8. Packaging-free shops give people the feeling that they can partly contribute to the environment preservation.
9. It would be really difficult for ordinary grocery stores to change into packaging-free ones.
10. The amounts of carbon emissions from food waste exceed those from package.

List of name
A. Rachelle Strauss
B. Susan Selke
C. Nina Goodrich
D. Brianne Miller
E. Susan Berr

Questions 10-13

Complete the sentences below.

Choose no more than **ONE WORD** from the passage for each answer.

Write you answer in boxes 10-13 on your answer sheet.

11. According to Strauss, people have been familiar with....., which now has a negative impact on the environment.
12. Making a considerable change in the supply chain can be costly due to some factors beyond .....effect.
13. According to Berry, one way to enhance the accessibility of free-packaging stores is to find additional .....

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