SAMPLE LETTER TO REDUCE PACKAGING AT TRADER JOES (WRITTEN BY AN RN GRADUATE)

Dear \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_,

This is a tough message to write, but maybe not because Trader Joe's is such a great place.

Currently, we do about 96% of our grocery shopping at TJs.  We love TJs.  The culture, the service, the prices, the food.  The store really fits us.

However, we have recently made a pledge to reduce our carbon footprint and one of the biggest sources of carbon is the food we buy for two reasons:

1. the food at TJs has a lot of packaging.  Zucchinis have a little mesh thing to absorb water, the plastic tray and the cellophane wrap.  Broccoli is wrapped in a bag.  The banana bread has a paper wrap around the bottom and a cellophane wrap.

2. The food is shipped from far and does not to my knowledge get sourced locally meaning gas is used to transport it long distances.

I hate to move away from TJs.  I don't want to.  All stores I have visited around the country including our San Rafael store are wonderful.  But, if TJs cannot reduce its carbon footprint and thereby help us reduce our carbon footprint, we will have to shift our buying elsewhere.

Please take any idea I have with a grain of salt as y'all know the grocery business better than I do.  Having said that, here are a few ideas that TJs could think about and test:

1. have some sort of program for regular buyers who can fill up a set amount using their own containers from a large vat of something sourced from a local farm.  For example, we always buy gallon of milk individually packaged in its own plastic container.  What if TJs had a large container sourced 1-2 times a week from a local dairy of each type of milk (whole, 2%, 1%, etc.) and we each filled up our own TJs glass or plastic gallon container that we brought in with us?  It could be cheaper for TJs to buy in bulk, though I know there are issues with milk spoilage and regulations.  But it used to be bought this way decades ago I believe.

2. Instead of having individual containers of coffee, could the coffee be in a large container that folks grind and pay for by the pound?  I know it wouldn't be sourced locally, but you could reduce the packaging.

3. Could we pay whatever price it is per pound for loose zucchinis instead of having them packaged and can they be sourced locally for each store?

Those are just a few ideas and they may or may not work.  I imagine if some smart TJ folks sat around, they could probably figure out enough workable ideas that it could drastically change the distance your products go, and the amount of packaging used.  In some ways it would reduce costs and in other ways it would increase costs, but I think if TJ's prices went up 10 to 20% by doing these things, you would keep your customers who enjoy TJs and who want to reduce our carbon footprint.  Given the recent presidential election, I think many of us are seeing the need to take action ourselves rather than rely on someone else as that is not an option anymore.  I sure hope that I don't have to change away from TJs to reduce my carbon footprint.  Thank you for reading this. Your Name Here