

protect & serve



RUTH PRICE, BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR AT SHARPAK AYLESHAM, TALKS ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF PROTECTIVE PACKAGING AND WHY INNOVATION NEVER GOES TO WASTE...



A taste of what SharPak Aylesham can offer

According to a recent report one third of all food produced in the world ends up as waste, costing consumers globally more than £259 billion per year. In addition, around 200,000 tonnes of the 15 million tonnes of food thrown away in the UK every year comes directly from stores. It's therefore no surprise that attitudes to food waste are continuing to change and take prominence.

The industry is evidently facing a dilemma: how to effectively reduce waste. One of the keys to this is through innovative packaging solutions. Supermarkets and growers must work much more closely with their suppliers to help tackle the UK's food waste crisis, while ensuring the consumer receives the same quality of packaging.

Protective packaging is not only crucial to the environment but also to business profits which can be impacted greatly by wasted produce. It's therefore important to consider innovative new advances in the industry and explore how these can help the bottom line.

FORWARD THINKING

Packaging has a crucial role to play in protecting food as it moves through the supply chain to the consumer. It increases shelf life, reduces food waste in transport and storage thanks to logistical flexibility, and improves product consistency, while new packaging and materials provide new opportunities to improve efficiencies. Protective packaging enables consumers to get more from the food they purchase and make savings through wasting less. Therefore, product protection must be the primary goal for packaging sustainability and protecting against damage.

There are a number of ways to effectively reduce food waste through protective packaging

improvements. For example, improved design of packaging helps to ensure it is fit for purpose so it adequately protects food products as it moves through the supply chain. This highlights why it is crucial packaging developers understand the distribution process and where and why waste occurs. For example, a one-size-fits-all multi-purpose packaging solution can help cut the amount of packaging used. By having the ability to hold multiple items, flexible solutions have many benefits including less stockholding for packers.

DAMAGE REDUCTION

When looking at the protective function of packaging, I believe one of the most neglected, yet most important, aspects is avoiding product damage in transit by keeping materials from moving, protecting against tampering or altering contents and distributing the weight evenly.



The fruits of innovation

Damages lead to increased costs for replacing goods, including manufacturing, shipping, and labour associated with processing the replacement and the claim. When a product has to be replaced and re-distributed, and the original damaged item returned and disposed of, the product's carbon footprint multiplies. These incidents can also impact a company's brand reputation.

Therefore, in my opinion, the best form of packaging is easy to transport, move and lift, and must be protected against being dropped or crushed. A regular shaped package can be stacked without too much space between each package being wasted and provides stronger support for the product itself. This means more packages can be transported in a container of a lorry. Unusually shaped packages can lead to space being wasted and this can be costly if thousands of the same package are been transported.

INDUSTRY AGENDA

Evaluating distribution and fulfilment processes within the fresh produce industry can play a major role in reducing environmental impact while enhancing corporate image and reducing overall costs. Protective packaging is an important part of this analysis. It supports and balances a company's broader sustainability goals and initiatives for creating operational efficiencies, conserving resources and enhancing brand reputation.

While food waste presents significant challenges, by addressing waste head-on and by offering innovative solutions, the industry can stay ahead of the curve and keep up with changing consumer and market demands. Small changes in behaviour around packaging can deliver huge benefits – keeping food fresher for longer, saving money and reducing the impact of food waste. Therefore, protective packaging, which offers total peace of mind, will undoubtedly remain at the top of the packaging agenda in 2015 and beyond.

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