

The packaging of the future is being invented right now

It is increasingly environmentally-friendly and also cheaper, as the manufacturers are innovating unceasingly to meet end-users' demands

When it comes to sustainable development, packaging manufacturers, particularly those signed up to the Save Food initiative, want to demonstrate that their products ensure hygienic distribution and cut food waste. Initiatives to lengthen the shelf life of fruit and vegetables are increasing. Researchers are working on films that allow controlled gas exchanges, allowing the produce to breathe better, and

can even compensate momentarily for a break in the cold chain. They are developing patches that allow precise amounts of oxygen and carbon dioxide through when the temperature rises above a certain threshold. Moisture control is also a crucial factor. As well as perforations, which are placed in an increasingly targeted fashion, new liner pads that absorb humidity and contain active compounds are being developed. Activated by mois-

ture, these compounds are liberated into the punnet in gradual stages, keeping the product fresher, reducing odours and increasing food safety. Antimicrobial packaging has also become cheaper since it has become possible to use nanoparticles of silver, which bring down the cost of this technique. Sustainability also involves packaging that is lighter and recyclable or compostable. Particularly in Britain, there is also a rise in heat-sealed punnets,

which use less plastic than lidded ones and are also cheaper. Another trend is the ability to print the punnets or moulded trays, giving companies a communication opportunity, enhancing the value of the product and avoiding the need to label the punnet. Lastly, packaging manufacturers continue to innovate in order to respond to new consumption trends like snacking and eating on the go.

■ VB

■ Ilip: Range of triangular punnets

Ilip has launched a range of triangular clamshell punnets for cherry tomatoes. Made of RPET, they are available in two heights: 54 mm and 58 mm. The company also offers custom printing of its moulded tray liners, with the client's logo, for instance.



■ Infia: Lateral perforation and printed punnets

Infia has placed holes in the sides of punnets intended for heat-sealing. This allows the fruit to breathe and avoids condensation in a type of pack which is increasingly in demand among retailers. The company has also launched printed punnets that enhance the value of the product and avoid the need for a label.



■ Polymer Logistics: Plastic that looks like wood

Polymer Logistics supplies returnable plastic containers that look like wooden boxes, making them more attractive for in-store display. They are available in three colours (light brown, dark brown and charcoal), in four heights for the 600x400 base (115 mm, 165 mm, 190 mm, 218 mm) and in 400x300x165 mm.



■ Smurfit Kappa: A cardboard box delivered flat for assembling and folding down by hand

The Vermak tray launched by Smurfit Kappa is a cardboard box which is delivered flat and opened out manually, with no need for a machine. Erecting it only involves folding in the four corners. It has a very small transport and storage footprint, as a pallet can hold 3,200 29x24x8 boxes. It also takes up little space on harvesting rigs.



■ NNZ: Flow-pack film and net

NNZ offers a flow-pack film with a net window that allows the product in the inner punnet to breathe. The film and the net are both made of polythene and can therefore be recycled together.

■ Guillin Group: Heat-sealable punnets

The Guillin group has developed a range of heat-sealable punnets, particularly in order to supply the British market, which is increasingly geared towards this type of pack for environmental and cost reasons. The film uses less plastic and is cheaper than a lid, and its application can be automated. The group has also launched the SPS range of heat-sealable punnets to fit 60x40 boxes, in three depths (40 mm, 50 mm, 60 mm), with the possibility of various moulded cells to suit different products. The base and sides have perforations and the film can also be perforated.

