

Will a revolution in packaging take place?

By: Jo Honert

Defining the right packaging type has nowadays become more and more a business in itself. We have already gotten used to different kinds of consumer requirement. An extended product life cycle is required for the delivery of more value to the supply chain and, indeed, to the product. The challenge to the industry is taking place right now.



Source: Jokey Plastics, Quick Pack

The reinvention of the can

Small stand-up pouches replaced aluminium trays with lidding film, which covered efficiently, but offered poor shelf recognition, because there was little to no visual appearance, as opposed to a prominent and attractively printed pouch surface.

Now there is really revolutionary plastic barrier packaging for processed food for humans, which could play a major role over other packaging types. These solutions not only offer great potential to the human food industry in terms of cost-effectiveness,

compared to tin cans, but it also offers new opportunities to pet food manufacturers.



Source: Weidenhammer

The 'reinvention of the can' offers many benefits to the pet food industry. Customers attach great importance to maximum storage and hygiene standards for pet food. Since the new technology can withstand temperatures of up to 126 degrees Celsius, it is perfect for sterilized and pasteurized products. Compared to a conventional tin can, it is safer to use as consumers will not cut themselves on sharp edges.

Thanks to the combination of in-mould labelling and sealing properties, the system offers an unlimited variety in designs and formats. The different design options can be used for clear differentiation at a point-of-sale. It is possible, for example, to produce entirely transparent packaging, which allows customers to see (parts of) the product.

Reinvention of the plastic pouch

Besides rigid packaging there are other solutions that can deliver outstanding

performance and benefits to their value chain as well – i.e., stand-up pouches of different types and shapes.

Thanks to the reduced retort time for a pouch, in which the necessary temperature is reached faster than in a bulky can or aluminium pouch, vitamins, minerals and the original taste of the food are preserved more fully. Flexible stand-up pouches made of laminates offer a performance innovation as compared to tin cans. They have less packaging weight per 100g of filled product and less shipping weight. This is one of the many advantages of flexible pouches.



Source: Takigawa Corporation

In addition to a long shelf life, without loss of vitamins and flavour, new packaging shapes help improve shelves. A new visual appearance is created by matt optics, glossy prints and colour design that all speak for themselves.

Extended shelf life, depending on the packed products, is achieved thanks to the materials used for excellent barrier



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properties. Hermetically sealed and tight prefabricated packaging delivers better value than other packagings.

SKU and logistic improvements

New generations of pouches with a number of different reseal and easy-to-open functions have been discussed in length in the past – now the time of change is upon us. Square bottom pouches help to optimize logistics and can create the benefits of improved surface utilization on shelves. The use of a square bottom pouch as a replacement of a round box can potentially decrease costs between 25% and 40%. Spout solutions open other new areas of application.



Source: Takigawa Corporation

Ecology and sustainability

Plastics made from renewable resources offer new opportunities and possibilities for both durable packaging and general injection moulding applications as well as flexible packaging solutions. For instance, biopolymers, whether biodegradable or based on renewable resources, have a similar natural approach. But sometimes

they do not fulfil all requirements of industrial packaging. Particular properties of high barrier and transparency are visionary aspects to a certain extent.

The use of renewable resource materials sends out a clear message about sustainability. Besides well-established bioplastics, such as PLA (poly-lactic acid), starch et cetera, there are now polymers available, such as polyethylene (PE) which are made from renewable resources.

A simple overview is shown in figure 1.

Conclusions

Rigid packaging solutions and new shapes have created new trends in barrier packaging. Pouch packaging is in the lead with new concepts and materials designed to meet the durability and sustainability requirements of consumers. New shapes generate better shelf performance, and improve logistics and cost and performance management. The wide range of options in terms of shape, design and format leads to better packaging. Join the trend and take advantage of the new packaging options. ■

Figure 1: Overview of bioplastics

| Biodegradable plastics (renewable or fossil based carbon source) | | Biobased bioplastics (renewable carbon source) | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| Biodegradable: | PLA, PHA, starch, cellulose, acetate, ... | Renewable: | PLA, PHA, starch, cellulose derivatives |
| | also PBAT, PBS | | also Bio-PE, Bio-PA |