

October 2012

## **Flexible Packaging – Fashion, Function and Protection for Food Innovations**

**When the world's largest food innovation marketplace SIAL takes place in Paris flexible packaging dresses many of the displayed food innovations. Different to the Haut Couture usually shown in Paris flexible packaging is not only stylish but also functional and protective.**

Thanks to innovations in design and ever improving technical advances in laminates, coatings and colours, the use of flexible packaging has never been more fashionable and offers the perfect product to package ratio, as well as other valuable qualities.

By its very nature, flexible packaging is highly adaptable. Clever design can drive further sustainability benefits for the products they clothe. These benefits range from appropriate portion sizes and re-closable packs that help minimise both food and packaging waste, through on-pack information that ensures appropriate storage and use, to lightweight functional packs that reduce the environmental impact during storage, distribution and transport.

Whilst the contribution of flexible packaging to the overall material and environmental impact of a product may be minimal, it also plays a crucial role in extending the shelf-life by preserving of the sensitive high-value contents such as coffee with its complex aromas and oils.

Coffee packed in flexible packaging is also keeping up with the trends for individual portions, or pods, giving both variety and convenience to the consumer. Family size coffee packs are responsible for a very small part of the overall environmental impact (less than 2%) of the total product. Individual portion packs have a higher ratio of around 8% at a similar total impact but bring the additional advantage of virtually no product waste.

The composite nature of flexible packaging i.e. mixed materials facilitates the search for the 'perfect fit' packaging solution by combining beneficial attributes of different materials whilst using the minimum material resources. The introduction of thin foil layers to create an absolute barrier effect, for example, can lead to major benefits in the preservation of nutritional value, extension of shelf-life and subsequently reduced food wastage.

For liquids in beverage cartons or pouches, such as milk or juice, the average weight of the primary pack is less than 3% of the total product weight. But this is not the only advantage. By giving protection and extended shelf life in an ambient environment, flexible packaging helps by saving the energy that would have otherwise been needed for chilled or frozen transport and storage.

cont.

**A Division of EAFA**

A relatively miniscule investment in flexible packaging for meat or dairy products helps protect a far greater investment in energy and natural resources in the product it protects. One example is the ratio for processed cheese, which has over 50 times the impact on the carbon footprint compared with the packaging used for it. Butter wrapped in a foil/paper laminate has a perfect protective layer with a minimal amount of material, which is only about one per cent of the total weight of the product.

But at SIAL the great decorative qualities of flexible packaging should not be ignored. New or more familiar and traditional packs – crisp and snack bags, stand up pouches for soups and dry products, confectionery wrappers – all demonstrate the benefits of flexible packaging at its best. Thanks to better inks and printing technologies the shelf stand out of many packs is excellent, as is their ability to re-enforce branding and product quality. So visitors to SIAL are invited to look beyond the product and see the enhancement flexible packaging is bringing; as a resource efficient protector and extender of product life; but also as a central part of the branding and consumer experience, offering both inner and outer value.

**Flexible Packaging Europe's** core business is representing the European flexible packaging industry at a European level, dealing with a range of issues relevant to the flexible packaging industry, most notably food contact and environmental issues.

**Further information:**

Guido Aufdemkamp

Director Communication

Email: [aufdemkamp@flexpack-europe.org](mailto:aufdemkamp@flexpack-europe.org)