

Packaging Gazette

Packaging the Future



By Julian Money, Founder of RAP

The UK leads the world in packaging innovation, demonstrating continuous excellence in both design and production. However, whilst this success story is one to be proud of, the impact of food packaging on the environment and society as a whole remains firmly under the spotlight.

Latest figures from the Waste & Resource Action Programme (WRAP) highlight that a staggering 7.2 million tonnes of food and drink are thrown away every year - the majority of which could have been eaten.

With consumer consumption on the rise and increased sales growth, retailers are facing mounting pressure to make better use of packaging to keep food fresher for longer, as well as to educate customers about the vital role packaging plays in this process.

To help address the issue, WRAP's Courtauld Commitment, which was first agreed in 2005, is now in its 3rd phase. This latest version is known as CC3 and the initiatives it sets out aim to reduce food waste even further.

CC3 sets ambitious targets of a further 1.1 million tonnes of waste reduction by 2015, bringing £1.6 billion in cost benefits to consumers and the industry.

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Importantly, the resulting benefits of the Commitment aren't constrained to those organisations directly involved. The current situation presents an ideal opportunity for the entire industry to assess its own circumstances and priorities in relation to enhanced packaging optimisation.

When it comes to implementing change, the modern packaging manufacturer is, of course, no exception. That's why RAP has recently launched its own White Paper, 'Packaging the Future'. An informative guide to reducing food waste, it explores the critical role the packaging manufacturer has to play in the ongoing development of sustainable packaging.

As such, RAP knows only too well how essential it is for manufacturers to continue to launch new and innovative products to cater for current demand and ease consumers' environmental concerns. Significantly this will not only mean companies are able to deliver sustainability, but also drive sales to bolster and boost the bottom line

However, improving packaging optimisation through the introduction of new technology requires a collaborative approach. Importantly, it must also be delivered throughout the supply chain, as reducing food waste requires different approaches for retailers and consumers. The benefit of this approach is that it can often result in more possibilities for the manufacturer, as it enables a variety of packaging options to be cost effectively combined, or used separately.

RAP invented and launched the Cartonboard Sandwich Wedge to the market in 2000 with Pret A Manger. From the outset it ensured the design of this unique packaging used the minimum amount of board possible. Since then, valuable changes have been made to the manufacturing process and materials selection. As a result, lightweighting of RAP's Dayfresh and Freshpack Cartonboard Sandwich Wedge has been taken to the next level. Significantly, the product is still the lightest cartonboard sandwich pack on the market, when compared to the equivalent design from ME2 followers in the same board grade.

Fresher Thinking

Encouragingly continued innovation by packaging experts is helping to keep food fresher for longer, in turn, saving money and reducing waste. Already identified as a key opportunity for improving freshness and extending shelf life, RAP has recently introduced the Modified Atmosphere (MA) Carton Sandwich Wedges, which are not only hermetically sealed, but also use barrier film that allows them to be gas flushed.

This technology is ideal for retailers who require a much longer shelf life, as the MA technology removes virtually all oxygen from inside the wedge. It extends the life of the product for up to 28 days, depending on the ingredients and the choice of packaging design used.

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These very long life MA packs are most suited to continental or US supply chains where the distances and logistics may require an extended time to reach point of sale. In RAP's White Paper a case study of Eby-Brown, illustrates the importance of this packaging solution. Not only has it enabled Eby-Brown to extend the shelf life of its fresh sandwiches, it has also enabled the company to take a prominent leadership role in food on the go.

However, even in a short supply chain, increasing the shelf life by just one day, from three to four days can potentially make a major impact on out-of-date wastage. This allows for greater fluctuations in consumer demand, resulting in a real impact on the amount of waste at the retailer.

The critical role of packaging in helping retailers meet their sustainability targets, especially Courtauld 3 signatories, presents a number of challenges surrounding extended shelf life and further waste reduction. However, the changing landscape is continuing to open up a raft of new opportunities and technical innovations across the industry.

Helping customers understand the potential of sustainable packaging and how to harness the full benefits of new technology is essential. For RAP, the end result is clear - tried and tested solutions that continue to push boundaries and deliver a significant transformation within customers' businesses.

RAP's free White Paper on reducing food waste is available for download at <http://www.rapuk.com>

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About RAP

Founded in 1997, to exploit the packaging designs of Julian Money, RAP has become the market leader in food-to-go packaging. The company combines technical, creative and commercial expertise to design and manufacture revolutionary food packaging that delights and influences consumers. A truly global organisation, RAP is headquartered in London with its design and technical centre and has manufacturing capabilities in Ireland, South Korea and Malaysia and the ability to distribute on a global basis.

For further product and event details contact RAP's information desk on 020 8392 8328 or visit www.rapuk.com

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