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Innovative packaging to keep blueberries fresh

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StePac L.A. Ltd. launches Xflow, a patented, functional, flowpack solution for blueberries as a cost-saving alternative to traditional preformed bulk packaging. Xflow meets market trends to reduce waste through the supply chain, save labor costs, and use leaner plastic packaging. The product will be showcased at the upcoming PMA Fresh Summit Expo in Orlando, October 19-20, stand #4054.



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Blueberries in clamshells are typically manually pre-packed and sealed in modified atmosphere packaging. This packing process can be labor-intensive. StePac was challenged to provide a solution that would enable a reduction in labor costs.

“Xflow is a next-gen automatic package that saves time and money while reducing the amount of plastic used by up to 40%,” explains Gary Ward, Ph.D., Technical Development Manager for StePac.

Xflow combines the modified atmosphere/modified humidity (MA/MH) properties of Xtend packaging in a film that also contains a unique sealing layer, making it compatible with conventional flow pack machines. StePac partners with Delfin Srl, an Italian machine manufacturing company that custom-designed and developed machines for Xflow packaging.

With the Xflow system, 12 Clamshells are transported on a conveyor belt into the flowpack machine, where they are wrapped with the Xflow film , then sealed before being placed in the carton. This solution reduces labor and film costs, plus results in a more attractive package. Xflow also improves horizontal airflow across the cartons—critical for efficient cooling and cold-chain management.

Xflow significantly extends freshness of fruits, vegetables, and even fresh flowers by providing the MA/MH feature that slows respiration and aging, while inhibiting microbial growth. It also reduces dehydration and weight loss during storage and shipping. The customized water vapour transmission rates (WVTR) of the film provide optimal moisture control for packaged produce throughout the supply chain, eliminating free moisture, thereby alleviating the risk of microbial decay.

“We specifically developed this packaging solution to help Peruvian exporters attain more efficient automatic packaging for blueberries,” adds Ward. “Other customers are currently conducting commercial trials with Xflow for spring onions and green beans and we expect many additional produce items will benefit from this advanced solution.”