

StePac merges automation with functional packaging

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StePac steps up to growing demand for automation with leaner packaging and less waste.

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This move facilitates the use of substantially leaner packaging films, with multiple benefits of extending fresh produce shelf life, minimizing food waste, and reducing the use of plastics, making for more environmentally responsible “green & lean” packaging. The initiative exemplifies the company’s concerted efforts to manufacture “purposeful” plastic packaging solutions that contribute to reducing food waste while having minimal impact on the environment. **StePac products will be showcased at the upcoming Fruit Logistica 2019 in Berlin, February 6-8, Hall 26, Booth #F-12.**

“When analyzing the carbon footprint of produce shipped in StePac’s packaging — especially when shipped by sea versus conventional air freight — we see that the packaging has a ‘climate-positive’ effect; that is, the carbon emission savings resulting from its use exceeds the carbon emissions of the packaging,” says Gary Ward, Ph.D., Technical Development Manager for StePac. “The transition to automated flowpack packaging significantly reduces the amount of plastic consumed, making the product even more ‘climate positive’.”

StePac developed multiple film structures to support the shift to automated MA/MH packaging. For example, the Xflow™ bulk flowpack film reduces the amount of plastic packaging used by up to 40%, while retaining its unique functions for substantially extending the shelf life of fresh produce in comparison to alternative options or if no packaging is used at all.

The unique Xflow films for automated packaging are currently gaining momentum for packing different types of vegetables for food service in the US, where the use of StePac’s innovative functional films has been instrumental in boosting both operational throughput and meeting shelf life requirements.

The move to automated packing systems is good news for growers/packers who will enjoy the added benefits of lowered labor costs. The new Xgo™ line of retail packaging encourages the packaging at source of fresh produce in high clarity MA/MH films ready for the shelves. The packaging of fresh goods such as passion fruit (which is particularly sensitive to excess moisture) in such high-performance packaging eliminates the need to sort, grade, and repack upon arrival and allows for their shipment by sea in retail packaging formats. In this case, the importers also benefit from less handling costs. The Xgo line of products for automated packaging includes lidding films (also available in resealable format) and various types of flowpack films.

Multiple factors are driving the consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables, including increased awareness of the importance of healthy eating as well as population growth. The demand for functional packaging that keeps produce fresh longer and reduces supply chain waste is high. At the same time, environmental considerations and natural resource constraints are creating the need for leaner recyclable packaging that effectively extends shelf life for long distance land and sea transport.

“StePac is attentive to the dynamics of a market displaying an increased demand for more responsible practices without forfeiting on functionality and convenience,” adds Ward. “We have dedicated much of our R&D efforts toward adapting and improving our products and systems to meet these needs and create more responsible packaging solutions.”

“We’re proud to present all of our new innovations in Berlin,” adds Hila Nagel, marketing and communications manager for StePac. “Our team of professionals will be at the show and we invite attendees to stop by and visit us at our booth.”