

## FOCUS: STORAGE, CONTAINERS AND PACKAGING

## Sustainable packaging trends that protect and preserve



The Evolution S tray sealing system is fully automatic. Its claim to fame is the world's fastest tray sealer.



The GrowPack net tray, using 50 per cent less plastic, can be top sealed and is totally recyclable.



The linerless tray is made possible with the Ravenwood Linerless Label Applicator.

KAREN DAVIDSON

Moving a berry to market is entirely different than a cucumber. All chuckles aside, that comparison demonstrates that there is no one solution for produce. In the rush for sustainability, growers and shippers must weigh the benefits and costs of various packaging formats that will be accepted by retail clients.

Crawford Packaging, a venerable packaging company circa 1963, is working with some

retailers on trialling new concepts. As Doug Crowe, regional sales manager for Crawford Packaging points out, "We bring innovative packaging solutions for produce. These include packaging automation, consumables and retail-ready packaging, a fully integrated solution. Sustainability is part of our DNA."

Here are several examples of how Crawford Packaging, headquartered in London, Ontario, is partnering with global suppliers to bring innovative and sustainable solutions to market.

#### Packaging automation

When exploring the potential for packaging automation, the team begins with a comprehensive needs analysis. This involves understanding the customer's current practices and their short- and long-term goals. There are many options available in the marketplace, but Crawford claims to stand by only proven and best in-class equipment solutions that enhance productivity while reducing operational costs.

Stuart Jackson, Crawford's vice president for produce

packaging, emphasizes the significance of sustainability in this arena. One example can be found in the fully electric single-lane tray sealer, Evolution S, touted as the fastest in the world.

"The energy savings achieved by this equipment can be up to 50 per cent when compared to conventional twin-lane machines," Jackson notes. Moreover, the introduction of thinner, fully recyclable tray sealing films – specifically a 31-micron film, down from 35 gauge – reduces plastic use, marking a step towards a completely sustainable solution.

#### Net trays

Net trays available under Crawford's private brand, GrowPack, are a truly sustainable innovation. Made with up to 50 per cent less plastic compared to conventional rPET trays and offering full recyclability, these mesh trays are available in a variety of formats and sizes. Most importantly, they can be run on standard tray-sealing equipment. There is also an added benefit for berry and tomato processors: these trays can reduce cooling time by 30 per cent, which lowers energy consumption and allows for faster speed to market

#### Modified atmosphere packaging

Modified atmosphere packaging (MAP) could be the next breakthrough. With rising food prices and alarming levels of food waste, growers and retailers are looking for shelf-life extending solutions. Functional packaging could be the answer, and MAP offers solutions not only for produce on the go, but also for bulk packaging used for transportation.

The most recent example, as Jackson points out, is iceless broccoli. Traditionally, broccoli grown in places such as Mexico, was shipped to Canada or the U.S. in ice-packed boxes.

"Think about the massive amounts of ice, the weight of these boxes, the labour for packaging, the necessity for

pricier lined boxes, and the increased freight costs due to weight," Jackson explains. "With MAP for bulk produce, all you need is a cardboard box with a MAP bulk liner in a proper cold chain environment. Just insert the broccoli and tie the top. It not only extends the shelf life but also streamlines the packaging process and reduces costs."

The Crawford Packaging team, passionate about produce packaging, travels the world to bring innovative solutions to North America. Recently, at a European trade show, they observed a growing shift towards paper packaging. That doesn't necessarily mean paper is better than plastic. The truth is, North Americans shop differently – less frequently – than Europeans, who shop daily or every other day.

"Paper has had a bad rep," says Crowe. "Automation is more difficult, but we are seeing how equipment solutions are catching up and how creative design is making the branding more visible and competitive. Water-soluble inks make this possible."

#### Paper alternatives

Paper alternatives for tray sealing film, flow wrapping film, and trays are now part of Crawford Packaging's sustainable, fully recyclable offering.

Another example is the growing adoption of post-consumer recycled (PCR) content in trays, which the food chain is increasingly adopting when possible. The Canada Plastics Pact states that using 30 per cent recycled content in polyethylene films is estimated to reduce energy consumption by a quarter and greenhouse gas emissions by one-third during manufacturing. However, there is a limited quantity of PCR resins available in Canada. The Canada Plastics Pact says its objective is not to eliminate plastic, but to eliminate plastic waste.

Additionally, the demand for fully recyclable cling film is on the rise, with a shift from PVC to PE film increasingly becoming part of customer requirements.




# Pioneering Freshness Through Innovative Packaging Solutions.

Complete Packaging Solutions for the Produce Industry.

**PACKAGING CONSUMABLES & RETAIL READY PACKAGING • PACKAGING AUTOMATION • TECHNICAL SUPPORT**

Discover more at [crawfordpackaging.com](http://crawfordpackaging.com)



**VISIT US AT BOOTH #127**











