reclosable packaging and dosing aids

Better storage, more accurate dosing, less waste

More and more packaging is being developed specifically to make consumers' lives easier. Reclosable packaging is on the rise, and there is also a trend towards more and better dosing aids. Such packaging helps consumers store products better, consume them in more accurate quantities, and waste less. While this is also good for the environment, the packaging does sometimes become more complex as a result.

prevent pack

Anticipating actual **consumer behaviour**

Reclosable packaging has been around since time immemorial. Just think of the many reclosable glass bowls, pots, and bottles. However, a great many new varieties of resealable packaging have been developed recently for a greater variety of products. Today, it is much more common to buy slices of ham and cheese in resealable trays with a click-shut lid or a film cover with an adhesive strip (see also Carrefour testimonial). 'This latest development began around ten years ago,' observes Peter Ragaert, a Technology Advisor at Pack4Food. 'Previously, sliced ham and cheese was only available in disposable plastic packaging. Many consumers would take out what they needed and simply leave the rest. Because the opened packaging no longer closed properly, the goods dried out more quickly.' With the resealable systems, the industry has cleverly anticipated actual consumer behaviour. Various systems are now available. The most well known are trays with click-shut or adhesive closures and bags with zip or rib sealing strips.

An **alternative** to portion packaging

Effective resealable packaging ensures that the remaining product stays fresh for longer. 'In that sense it is sometimes a good alternative to portion packaging,' explains Ragaert. 'It anticipates the same combination of needs: buy in large quantities but consume in smaller quantities. Resealable packaging is also extremely user-friendly and flexible, since you can take out precisely the amount you want. Improved dosing aids are therefore constantly being developed, especially for liquid and viscous products. Think of the screw-tops on drinks cartons, the nozzles on ketchup or mustard bottles, or the taps on the Bag-in-Boxes for wine, fruit juice, and milk. Bag-in-Box is a textbook example: instead of a 75 cl bottle, you now buy a 3 litre box, but thanks to the closing and dosing system, the contents stay fresh for longer.'

good **to remember**

More and more **reusable** packaging and **dosing systems** are being developed to anticipate the needs of consumers.

Effective reclosable packaging and better dosing systems ultimately mean **less food waste**, a major environmental gain.

Conversely, these new packaging techniques generally require more material and are more complex. It is a continuous **search for the right balance**.

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reclosable packaging and **dosing aids**

If food is stored in disposable packaging after opening, it dries out more quickly. An effective resealable tray solves this problem.

The Bag-in-Box is a textbook example: perfectly reclosable and fitted with a handy dosing system.

Research and development **in a triangular partnership**

Producers see reclosable packaging and dosing systems as a way of winning over consumers to their products. The industry therefore wants to continue developing user-friendly packaging. That however is not easy. 'Producers have to bear in mind a great many parameters,' explains Guy Dohogne, also a Technology Advisor at Pack4Food. 'How do we limit the extra cost? How do we monitor food safety, for example if we use adhesives? What is the impact on filling systems? New packaging techniques are therefore almost always developed in a triangular partnership with a food producer, a packaging producer, and a manufacturer of filling systems. Together, they seek practical and safe solutions that are also efficient, economical, and environmentally sound to implement.'

Ease of use and **environmental considerations** in balance

The impact on the environment is also a constant point of attention. 'It is a continuous search for the right balance,' says Dohogne. 'A screw-top on a drinks carton or a cheese box with a click-shut lid inevitably means more material. On the other hand, they result in less product waste, which is a major environmental gain. In any case, you have to be extremely careful when determining impact on the environment. For example, where does the packaging producer buy its raw materials? What happens to the packaging material after use? If packaging comes from or travels to the other side of the world, we also have to consider the environmental impact of its transport and the consequences for the local market. The way in which consumers shop also affects a product's footprint. You can only estimate the environmental impact correctly if you perform a full life cycle analysis for each packaging design. We must limit the impact on the environment as much as possible by choosing the right materials and using the best available technologies.'

For additional **information**

Pack4Food is a consortium of knowledge centres, network organizations, and businesses concerned with innovative food packaging and sustainable and functional packaging.

www.pack4food.be