

# Thorough approach is **essential to success**

## Delhaize saves 108 tons of plastic and wins Greener Packaging Award thanks to packaging diagnosis

In 2012, Delhaize modified its packaging for dried fruit based on the recommendations arising from the packaging diagnosis carried out by XIOS Hogeschool Limburg. The results are impressive. "We followed the advice of the experts and replaced the existing plastic jars with plastic bags. By doing this, we save no less than 108 tons of plastic each year-without making a single concession in terms of product quality", says Jonathan Martens, Environmental Project Manager at Delhaize. "What is unique about the packaging diagnosis is that all aspects of the packaging are taken into consideration, from product protection and storage to transport and logistics." Delhaize was rewarded for its efforts in late 2012 with the Grand Prize at the first edition of the Greener Packaging Awards.

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### Packaging **that serves** the product

For Delhaize, product quality is at the center of the company's packaging policy. "We believe there is no such thing as perfect packaging", says Jonathan Martens. "Packaging optimization must therefore be looked at on a product-by-product basis. Success depends upon taking full advantage of the different functions of packaging in view of the product, and then on that basis deciding exactly which packaging and how much packaging is needed."

"Because quality is essential to us, there is a strong focus on protection during transport, extending the shelf life and providing consumers with the best way to store the product at home. Preventing wastage is also a priority. The new packaging for our cheese slices is a good example of this. By adding an extra sheet of plastic, and packaging the slices in threes, we ensure that the freshness and flavor of the last slice is preserved-and that it doesn't get thrown out."

Finally, there are also constraints imposed by the market. "A good example of this is packaging for meat products. Vacuum packaging for steak, for instance, is unacceptable to Belgian consumers, even though it requires less packaging and the meat stays fresh longer", says Jonathan Martens.



good to remember

Product quality lies at the center of Delhaize's packaging policy. Packaging reduction is not an end in itself, and it should never lead to compromises in product quality.

The packaging diagnosis stands for **objective** and **well-founded advice** that takes into account all aspects of packaging.

The **fresh perspective** of an outside party is critical to the success of the diagnosis and leads to unexpected solutions.

# Thorough approach is essential to success



### The **big** picture

"It is only when all of these aspects are taken into consideration that a packaging optimization can be assured of success", Jonathan Martens continues. "Modifying packaging is thus something that must be well thought out. That indeed is what makes the packaging diagnosis of XIOS Hogeschool Limburg so interesting. Their experts share our global vision, and as such they focus not only on reducing the amount of packaging but also on taking all other aspects of the product into account."

The fresh perspective afforded by an outside party also provides significant added value. "The suggestion to change the packaging for dried fruit from plastic jars to plastic bags is actually pretty far-reaching and not something you might think of spontaneously. As a business, you tend to develop a blind spot to your

own operations to some extent, which makes it difficult to see all the options. Due to their extensive expertise, the experts can also accurately assess the impact of modifications on all aspects of logistics: transport, storage, intermediate packaging and automated systems."

Finally, Delhaize was also highly appreciative of the impartiality of the advice. "Naturally, many of our suppliers come to us and offer so-called free advice", explains Jonathan Martens. "There's nothing wrong with that, because there are always things you can learn. Nevertheless, you can never be sure of the degree to which commercial intentions are colouring their advice. In this case however, you can count on objective, well-founded and balanced advice."

Jonathan Martens

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For more **information**

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