

The fast track to better packaging

Independent experts analyze your packaging and point the way to quick wins

Members of Fost Plus and VAL-I-PAC can retain the services of an expert from the Packaging Centre at XIOS Hogeschool Limburg or the Belgian Packaging Institute (BPI) for a free packaging diagnosis. This diagnosis was specifically developed to assist companies in optimizing their current packaging. But what does this diagnosis involve? Exactly what is analyzed? What results can you expect? And why might this be beneficial for your company? In this Preventpack dossier, you will find answers to all of these questions and you will hear from two companies that are already reaping the benefits of our packaging diagnosis.

prevent **pack**

An **outside perspective** does wonders

With their free packaging diagnosis, Fost Plus and VAL-I-PAC are meeting a clear need on the part of their members. "We see on a daily basis that a great deal of packaging used today was developed anywhere between five to ten years ago", says Gaëlle Janssens, Prevention & R&D Manager at Fost Plus. "This is not necessarily a problem, but products and needs evolve over time, and developments in the world of packaging are extremely fast-paced".

"Packaging optimization offers both large and small companies a host of opportunities to simultaneously cut costs and increase

their sustainability", confirms Karel Gemmeke, Business Development Director at VAL-I-PAC. "Plus it also involves structural savings. Think it through well and you will reap the rewards year after year".

"An outside perspective can do wonders", notes Gaëlle Janssens. "Our experts are able to maintain the proper distance and take an unbiased look at packaging. They dare to question things that companies - and their packaging suppliers - have often taken for granted for years. They also provide concrete advice that companies can use when dealing with their packaging supplier".

Concrete, practical and thorough

"It is not our intention to saddle companies with major investments or revolutionary new technologies", observes Gaëlle Janssens. "Our packaging diagnoses are aimed primarily at producing concrete and practical measures that companies can implement fairly quickly. At the same time we provide a long-term perspective and make suggestions for their future packaging".

The experts who conduct the packaging diagnosis always look at the big picture. "Packaging optimization is all too often reduced to 'as little packaging as possible', but that does not always make sense", says Gaëlle Janssens. "There are simply too many different

factors at play: preserving the product, protecting it during transport, preventing wastage, etc".

"It does not end with the product-packaging combination either", adds Karel Gemmeke. "A great deal of attention is devoted to the secondary and tertiary packaging and the way it supports product storage, transportation on pallets or the unpacking at the point of sale. The experts also examine the impact of the proposed improvements on the production processes. That way we ensure that the recommendations can actually be put into practice".

good to remember

All members of Fost Plus and VAL-I-PAC are entitled to a free packaging diagnosis conducted by an expert from XIOS Hogeschool Limburg or the Belgian Packaging Institute.

The diagnosis aims at quick wins: **concrete and practical recommendations** that can be implemented right away on a company's existing packaging.

Companies only need to devote **half a day** of their time to the diagnosis.

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Impartial advice from experts

The packaging diagnoses are conducted by experts affiliated with the Packaging Centre at XIOS Hogeschool Limburg or the Belgian Packaging Institute. They have extensive knowledge of all facets of packaging and have state-of-the-art assessment tools at their disposal.

"These diagnoses also help companies ask the right questions to their packaging suppliers", says Gaëlle Janssens. "It is a good idea to confer with suppliers on a regular basis to determine the most beneficial solutions to a packaging problem. Armed with the results of our packaging diagnosis, companies have additional leverage when entering into these discussions".

"All recommendations are completely free of obligation", Karel Gemmeke goes on to emphasize. "Companies are free to decide whether to implement the advice or not. And it goes without saying that we treat all information shared with us during this process as strictly confidential".



Packaging diagnosis - what can you expect?

1 - Half a day at your location

An expert will spend half a day at your location. The visit typically involves a tour of your warehouse or production environment and a detailed discussion concerning your packaging and products. This discussion gives you an opportunity to provide the necessary background on your company, your customers and the sector in which you do business. Specific information on the production, transport, storage and consumption of your products is also considered. Finally, the scope of the packaging diagnosis is defined by mutual agreement so that you know exactly what to expect.

2 - A thorough analysis of your packaging

The experts set to work using the information they have gathered from you. They make a complete assessment of your packaging, analyze potential areas for improvement and devise a number of optimization scenarios. In the process, they account for all of the functions that your packaging needs to provide. The potential impact of any adjustments made to production, transport or storage is also clearly identified.

3 - A report you can immediately put to use

The experts compile their findings into a report that typically consists of approximately ten pages. It contains an overview of the areas for improvement that have been identified, specific ways to improve, the results to be expected and the potential impact. You will find measures that you can readily apply to your current packaging without incurring major investments as well as more far-reaching recommendations for your future packaging.

Request your **free packaging diagnosis** via:

Fost Plus: prevention@fostplus.be | **VAL-I-PAC:** prevention@valipac.be

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

"Naturally, many of our suppliers come to us and offer so-called free advice".

For more **information**

www.delhaize.be

www.greenerpackagingaward.be

Stûv achieves **economic** and **environmental** gains thanks to the optimization of its cardboard packaging

Damage rate of stove ducts cut to less than 1 %

Packaging optimization does not always equal packaging reduction. The addition of protective material can sometimes substantially reduce the risk of damage and prevent materials from being wasted. This can have profound economic and environmental benefits, especially when the logistical cost of replacing damaged parts is considered. This is the conclusion arrived at by Stûv, a Belgian manufacturer of wood - burning stoves. The company was already considering reinforcing the cardboard boxes used to package its stove ducts. This view was confirmed by a packaging diagnosis conducted by the Packaging Centre at XIOS Hogeschool Limburg, Fost Plus and VAL-I-PAC. "The experts delivered a proof of concept for the optimization that we had in mind. Their visit came at just the right time", says Youness Issaf, who is responsible for packaging projects at Stûv.

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Stûv is an innovative Belgian company that specializes in individual wood heating solutions. The company has two production facilities in the Province of Namur (Bois-de-Villers and Floreffe), which together produce approximately 12,000 stoves per year, 75 % of which are destined for export. "We have evolved from a stove manufacturer into a supplier of integrated heating solutions that are both aesthetically and environmentally sound, in part thanks to their energy efficiency. The responsibility we take for the environment is reflected not only in the inherent quality of our products, but also in the way they are packaged. We apply our commitment to the environment in as many aspects of our business as possible", says Thomas Duquesne, Science and Technology Manager at Stûv.

Stûv first learned about the packaging diagnosis through an article published in Dynamisme, a publication of the Walloon

Union of Companies (UWE). The article immediately attracted the interest of the company, which was looking for a second opinion regarding a number of ideas it had for packaging optimization. "An outside perspective is always interesting. The technological expertise of suppliers is usually limited to one specific type of packaging material, and because of this, they seldom see the bigger picture. These experts have vast knowledge of different materials and take a much broader view", notes Youness Issaf.

The visit from the experts turned into an interesting exchange of ideas and a perfect opportunity to assess a number of packaging options that at first glance may seem odd. Just one example: the empty spaces of roughly 20 cm inside the wooden crates in which the stoves are packed proved to be perfectly justified. They guarantee the stability of the product and prevent superfluous packaging.

good to remember

The diagnosis **confirmed** the optimization plans Stûv had in mind.

The decision to go with a simple cardboard reinforcement is both **cost-effective** and **environmentally** friendly.

Besides being a **financial win**, it also increases the **satisfaction** of both customers and employees.

Stûv achieves **economic** and **environmental** gains thanks to the optimization of its cardboard packaging

Cardboard reinforcement **better than foam**

But the first goal of the packaging diagnosis is naturally to identify a number of quick wins.

The greatest potential - which Stûv had already identified and which was ultimately confirmed by the diagnosis - lay in the packaging of the stove ducts. Because Stûv does mostly custom work, their ducts are available in various sizes and finishes. The high damage rate for these ducts - in excess of 5 % - was striking when compared to the average rate for all Stûv products, which amounts to less than 1 %. Both Stûv and the external experts quickly realized that this high damage rate was due to the cardboard packaging.

"We studied several techniques, including polyurethane foam packaging. However, we were not convinced of the quality of these materials, not to mention the fact that they scored poorly in terms of the environment. In the end we opted to add cardboard reinforcements, which provide better protection and are made from a material that is easy to recycle." Based on analyses made by Stûv and suggestions from the experts, the cardboard boxes were enlarged and fitted with internal cardboard reinforcements in the shape of two half Vs. The use of just one type of reinforcement makes stock management easier and maximizes storage space.

A **positive balance** - and not just financially

Thanks to the new packaging design, the damage rate of the ducts dropped below the 1 % threshold. The cost of ducts damaged during transport was estimated at EUR 5,000 per year. The cost of the additional cardboard amounts to only EUR 3,000 per year. From a financial perspective, the operation turned

out to be positive. In addition to the pure financial gain, it also benefitted the environment due to the use of a recyclable mono-material. The new packaging is also boosting customer and employee satisfaction: less damage to products means that more installations can be completed with fewer complications.

Lessons learned

For Stûv, the diagnosis came at precisely the right moment. The company was faced with a decision concerning the optimization of the packaging for its stove ducts. The experts closely examined

the choice of cardboard reinforcements and delivered a proof of concept. Once the choice was confirmed, attention turned to other issues which should not be underestimated:

Communicate. The modifications to the stove duct packaging made the company's internal logistics more complex. That is why Stûv made an extra effort to convince employees of the benefits the new solution will provide and to show them how

convincing the results really are. Even though the changes were not likely to meet with resistance, it still proved beneficial to explain why they were necessary.

Remain in control. Stûv believes it is important to solicit the opinion of an outside specialist who can take an impartial look at internal processes. However, the company did not adopt a wait-and-see attitude, hoping that those outside experts come up

with a miracle solution. At the end of the day, no one understands the company better than those who work there day in and day out. When it comes to packaging optimization, the company itself should always remain in control.

Keep it simple. The most effective solutions are often the simplest ones. This is why Stûv chose a single cardboard reinforcement instead of foam or plastic, both of which score

much worse in terms of the environment. By opting for a single type of packaging, Stûv simultaneously optimized its stock management and the storage of its packaging.