

Individual packaging grows in importance

Which societal trends are driving this evolution?

In recent years, more and more individually packaged goods are appearing on store shelves. This is especially true for perishable products. What triggered this trend? What is the usefulness of such single servings? 'Consumers take less time on various daily tasks, are living more often alone, and are increasingly demanding. *Single servings capitalize on these trends,'* says trend watcher Herman Konings.

prevent **pack**

More and more **single person homes**

Belgian society has changed tremendously over the past thirty years. Not the least of which is the composition of the family. Since the 1970s, more and more people are living on their own. The number of divorces in Belgium has more than quadrupled. In addition, the number of men and women that have chosen to remain single has increased substantially. The food industry has responded with individually packaged food

products. In addition, the products are proportioned to the needs of a single person. What use is a family pack of meat to a person living alone? A smaller package reduces the risk of spoilage. However, do people who live alone always consume on their own? 'This is certainly not the case all the time. In our line of business we define a person living alone as a person who consumes alone if he or she does not share a laundry basket,' explains Konings.

Do **single servings** save time?

There is more to the increased popularity of single servings. 'People also take less time with various daily tasks,' states Konings. 'This is expressed in their eating habits, among other things. They increasingly, for instance, eat breakfast or lunch on the way to work. This has become extremely easy thanks to individually packaged snacks and other food products.' The amount of spare time has decreased more for women than for men. Women are becoming increasingly active and are climbing higher up the corporate ladder. But this does not occur at the expense of their household activities; on the contrary. Konings:

'Even though more and more women have a busy job, they still take charge of the biggest part of the domestic chores. Hence, single servings come in handy. They help save valuable time.' The cookie box is a perfect example. Since families are smaller than in the past, the content of the cookie box is eaten far less quickly. Consequently, the risk increases that the last cookies are less palatable and that they end up in the garbage bin and new ones have to be purchased. By packaging them individually, the cookies will remain fresh longer. And the family has to rush to the store less frequently.'

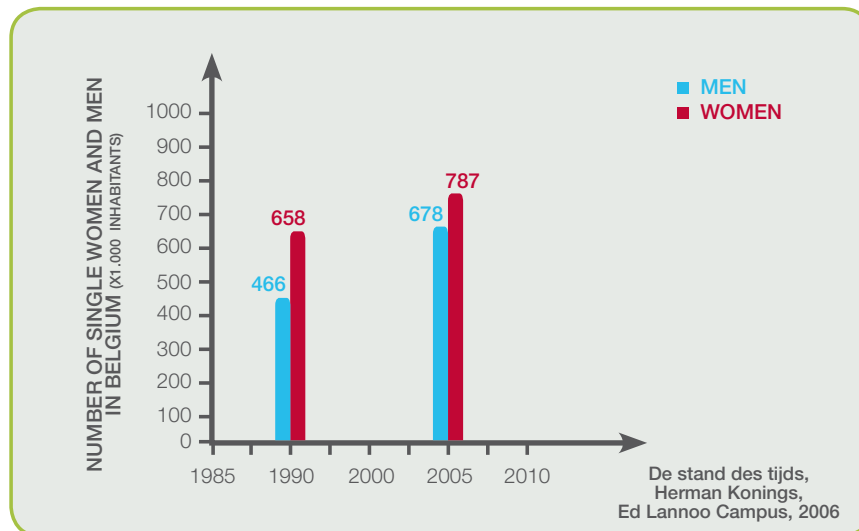
good to remember

Belgium has an increasing number of divorces and single men and women. **Single servings** focus on the **needs** of the individual consumer.

Belgian men and women take less time to cook than previously. **Individually packaged** goods allow them to **save time**.

Consumers are increasingly concerned about their health. **Portion** size is important in a **healthy and balanced meal**.

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More and more people are living alone. They are not interested in large family packs since they often have to throw away a major portion of the contents. Single servings are a perfect fit.

Individual portions for a healthy, balanced meal

Consumers are more conscious of what they eat. They want to be sure that what they eat is healthy. The composition of the product plays an important role as well as the size of the portion. What does it take to offer someone a healthy and

balanced meal and in what amount? Food producers answer these questions by adjusting their packaging and by informing them about this via the packaging.

Which packaging trends are still to be expected?

Due to their increasing commitments, consumers are more conscious of wasting products. Single servings give more control over the spoilage of packaged food. 'Intelligent' packages take things a step further. They inform the consumer of which

products in the refrigerator are reaching their end date. Such types of packaging have the potential to cause a real revolution in the future,' concludes Konings.

Single servings can limit the wasting of product

For additional information

- Pocket Marketing/nXt, Antwerp trends and future research agency: www.nxt.be
- Interreg IVB project Greencook: www.green-cook.org

