

Talking trends: What caught our eye

With sustainability and circularity the dominant theme at Interpack, it features strongly in PKN's round-up of innovation highlights. **Lindy Hughson** and **Dominique Huret** report.

Bouncing along

Expanded polypropylene (PP) was on show on several stands as an alternative to expanded polystyrene (EPS). Australian company Bouncee, part of the ICEE Technology Group, has engineered a patented solution for what it calls 'zero waste delivery for perishables'. It's made from highly insulative, expanded PP and rigid PP for the hinge areas. Its USP is the patented flat-fold technology. The packaging solution is targeted at grocery deliveries, ready meals, pharmaceuticals and other applications where perishables must be held at a specific temperature. An insulated divider creates separate compartments for wet, dry, hot and cold goods. CEO Hamish Hingston (centre) was demonstrating the product, along with Eleanna Hingston (left) and Gary Skinner.



Metal can do

In the metal packaging zone, we saw the newest iteration of the OpenVac can system, which we reported on at Interpack 2017, and which has now also been adapted with a glass base instead of metal, still with the vacuum sealed metal closure. The customer, which is using it for retort cooked rice, wanted to move away from a plastic jar.

We also heard from ThyssenKrupp about bluemint EcoMild steel, a high quality flat steel with reduced CO2 emissions, that's used by brand owner Ricola for its confectionery products. The steel is available to Australian metal can converters who source from ThyssenKrupp.



Paper trail

Paper-based packaging options were everywhere to be seen, with companies quite careful on the messaging around the barrier layer, to avoid greenwash if the packaging includes some form of plastic barrier. Solutions for fresh produce abounded, reflecting the growing demand from this sector. Weber Verpackungen had paper wraps for herbs, lettuce and flowers, with the 'almost without plastic' claim. On the Taghleaf stand we spotted paper-based pouches for pet food with Nativia's PLA barrier solution.



Pull factor

Dry moulded fibre specialist Pulpac made its debut as an Interpack exhibitor, showcasing its wide range of innovation under development, including the paper bottle under development by Pulpac and PA Consulting as part of The Bottle Collective. Founder and CEO Linus Larsson Green spoke about the company's new way of doing business – as a collaborative collective – and its new way of making packaging.



Caps off but still on

Tethered caps were prolific, as the deadline for the EU mandate draws near. United Caps showcased its new tethered closure for carton packaging, the 23 H-PAK. This closure consists of three pieces: spout, closure and cutter. Other solutions in the market typically consist of four pieces. Fewer pieces means easier recycling. The tamper-evident band or first-time-use feature creates an optimal access point, enhancing the user experience and keeps all parts intact for easier recycling. The cutting edge is specially designed to cut through the pre-laminated hole with minimal effort. The patent-pending closure also has a super-strong hinge ensuring the box-fresh experience consumers are looking for.





Easy off

Alpia is working with CCL on the Easy-Off label, a new IML technology for stretch blow moulding, or in-mould labelling. There's no need for glue, as a special lacquer is used to apply the label to the bottles using blow-moulding pressure. The 40-bar pressure combined with a temperature of 110°C for the stretch blow-moulding process means that the labels are automatically positioned and fixed in the blow mould. The added benefit of recycling is that the label is made of OPP and can be easily separated by the flotation process. The technology is ready to be commercialised, but not yet on the market.

Label free

Sidel 1Skin is an ultralight bottle (28 grams for a 1-litre format) with a neck reduced to 3.2cm, a cap-lock feature to keep the open bottle top away from the consumer's face and... no label. Precise graphic elements are created using Sidel's advanced mould technologies combined with its blow moulding expertise. QR or bar codes can be printed on the bottle closure to provide information to consumers or enable individual unit sales.



Wash off labels for PET



CCL is a pioneer of self-adhesive labels that can be washed in standard industrial washing machines. Back in 2015, the Canadian group presented its WashOff labels, which combine the advantages of self-adhesive labels with glass washing at 65°C. The labels dissolve in the water so don't clog the washers. This solution is seeing renewed interest with the resurging trend towards returnable glass bottles. In the final stages of development, but not on the market yet, is a solution for PET bottles, which can be washed at 53-54°C.

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PET sparkles

Another highlight on show was the sparkling wine bottle in PET designed and produced by Italian processing technology and container design company SIPA. This is not only an innovative concept, breaking down barriers in the market for PET, but also a solution to supply chain challenges, including spiralling costs for energy, raw materials and glass bottles – the latter are harder to find and sometimes 30% more expensive for wine makers in Europe. A key part of innovation is the bottle neck, which looks just like the glass version, meaning that it accepts the classical mushroom-shaped cork with its metal cage. The base also looks the same as the 'original'. The design provides a top-load resistance of 350kg. Consumers will experience the same sensory experience with the new PET bottles, from uncorking to pouring. SIPA says the PET versions are much lighter, at just 90g, and "virtually unbreakable". This is also good news for operators along the fast-changing supply chain, as sales via e-commerce and home delivery continue to rise.



Paper tube

Stora Enso showed off its first-ever paperboard tube with a fibre-based closure. The company first launched its paperboard tube concept in 2019 for cosmetics packaging as an alternative to plastic tubes. Now, with a fibre closure as launched at Interpack, the solution contains more than 85% fibre content, the highest proportion available in a tube design. The tube is composed of Stora Enso's barrier-coated board material, Natura Shape, and a screw cap designed in collaboration with Blue Ocean Closures and assembled by AISA. Intended for cosmetics and personal care applications, it is expected to be commercially available in 2024.



Fine print

Pressures to reduce plastic waste have mobilised Asahi to develop a label-less bottle for its core brand in Japan, Jurokucha, in 630ml PET, with direct marking on the bottle using high-definition UV laser marking technology. The technological breakthrough is in the capability to mark fine and complex Japanese Kanji characters on PET bottles, not possible with conventional CO2 lasers. According to Asahi, if all conventional Jurokucha products with labels were replaced with direct-marking bottles, plastic use would be reduced by approximately 190 tons per year and CO2 emissions by approximately 1200 tons.



Snap to it

In an innovative recycling trial designed to close the loop on soft plastic food packaging in the UK, Heinz, Tesco, Berry Global and SABIC have teamed up to create a certified circular PP solution for Heinz Beanz Snap Pots. Soft plastic packaging waste is returned by consumers to collection points at Tesco stores and then converted in an anaerobic process to oil. SABIC uses the oil in the production of new PP resin, from which Berry Global manufactures Snap Pots for filling with Beanz and delivery to Tesco. The new tubs contain 39% of certified circular SABIC PP.



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Salad days

SABIC also showcased bags it's making for Bonduelle. Fresh-cut salads are packaged in food-contact film using certified circular SABIC BOPP produced by advanced recycling of post-consumer plastics. The BOPP film made by VIBAC contains 30% recycled content via mass balance certification. These bags are fully recyclable in polyolefin waste streams.



Milky monsters

French blow-fill-cap specialist Serac showcased Milky Monsters, a playful small format PET bottle suitable for children. The preforms come from SGT and were developed in partnership with Avient, a colourant specialist. It is a single-layer dairy preform with a low mineral content (less than 4%), developed for the dairy products market. These preforms incorporate a new additive technology called ColorMatrix Lactra Four One Zero, which offers superior whiteness to the bottle and high protection for photosensitive liquids, blocking light up to 99.9%, even with a low wall thickness (200 microns). Dairy products, such as UHT milk, sensitive to oxidation are thus protected and keep longer, up to six months, without altering taste or sensory and nutritional properties. This 100% recyclable single-layer preform can be perfectly integrated into a closed bottle-to-bottle circuit and can contain up to 100% rPET.



Aussies in the aisles

When you're in the thousands-strong visitor throng at a big trade show like Interpack, bumping into a friendly face from back home is always welcome.



1. Ian Hayes, APCO, and Michael Grima, QDesign Enterprise.
2. Rym Kachouri, Foodmach and Bill Dopfer, Recopak.
3. Paul Meischke and Russel White, JL Lennard.
4. Foodmach's Earle Roberts, Chris Yule and Rym Kachouri with Emanuele Piva, PE Labellers (third from left).
5. Phil Biggs, Packaging Partners; Nerida Kelton, AIP/WPO; Pierre Pienaar, WPO/AIP.
6. Daniel Malki, Jet Technologies and Lindy Hughson, PKN
7. Michael Moran, APPMA; Blake Svejkovsky and Robert Marguccio, Heat and Control; Denni Egan, APPMA.
8. Lindy Hughson and Joe Foster, O F



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