The revival of the flow pack

IDM visited Bemis in Belgium

Bemis, a leading provider of value-added flexible packaging materials, has just embarked on a big extension of its Be-Pack™ Packaging Concept for packaging cheese and other products. As it happened, IDM was the first trade journal ever to be invited to understand the concept and here’s our report.

“In flexible packaging, competition is fierce, especially because new players who produce in low-cost regions compete on price. Bemis, however, excels at material science, application know-how, and can leverage its capacities as a global brand. “We do not strive to beat competition with price of the materials but with value added solutions that allow our customers to win”, explains Markku Rommi, Director of Marketing at Bemis.

Intense R&D

Based in Neenah, in the U.S. State of Wisconsin, in the heart of the American dairy region, Bemis runs a brand new global R&D Innovation Center (BIC). The state-of-the-art environment helps develop new packaging solutions as well as provide insights to better understand how packaging performs in and out of the store. This makes Bemis one of the most R&D-intensive packaging solution providers in the industry. BIC provides answers to some of the toughest questions such as understanding shelf space, evaluating consumer eye tracking and product differentiation in a 100% customisable retail environment.

Developments which may seem new to cheese packaging have been around...
for a good couple of years for Bemis customers, before these solutions became the norm through adoption by the cheese industry as a whole. For instance, the Paper-Like™ Paper Alternative was introduced by Bemis six years ago in South America, and the PET sealing EZ Peel™ Reseal Convenience Feature has been a standard for many European customers of Bemis for the past 10 years.

**Be-Pack Packaging Concept**

With Be-Pack, Bemis offers a flowpack solution for all kinds of cheese, be it for deli-counter displays or for the self-service shelves. Luc Vandendriessche, Business Development Manager of Be-Pack™ states that today’s standard for a cheese packaging is easy opening and reclosing. “Lately, we have noticed a move from rigid packaging towards full flexible packaging solutions. And this move has kept safety and convenience at the same high level. Machine suppliers also have been very creative,” says Luc Vandendriessche, “in developing concepts based on full flexible film combined with thin gauged plastic trays or coated carton inserts as to preserve pack stability and rigidity. Easy opening today for flowpacks can be achieved with a zipper, a self-adhesive tape, an Applix or a self-adhesive label.”

Currently, the Be-Pack™ Packaging Concept has been streamlined and is likely to grow. More information on these what Bemis calls ‘Smart Formats,’ can be found by contacting their sales organizations active in 13 countries. While packaging at the store, behind the deli-counter is the simplest thing, deli-counter flow packs such as Be-Pack™ usually provide an easy peel and a gas flush which ensures safety and freshness of each cheese type till sell-by date. Furthermore, Bemis focusses R&D on new sealant technology to prolong the sell-by date.

A flowpack concept based packaging solution is the ideal concept offering a large printing surface, the required convenience of easy open & reclose, reduced waste disposal and eco-tax savings. “Based on the Bemis R&D program and based on my conversations with machine constructors who are focusing on line output, I’m expecting interesting developments over the next few years,” states Luc Vandendriessche.

**Sustainability**

“Sustainability for us means that we rather save material in the first place. Bemis has been a mono-material sealing pioneer for the past 10 years. A fusion seal of mono A-PET means 50 µm less PE film which saves up to 15 percent material. This is far better than recycling”, says Mr. Rommi. Even if the PET sealing top films are slightly higher in price, the material saving is so important that it easily compensates the higher price. Skin packaging can save up to 25% of material, adds Mr. Rommi, and the Be-Pack™ Packaging Concept saves as much as 40% weight by using a very small tray. The combination of Be-Pack™ with Paper-Like™ is a huge success with Bemis customers who are looking to further differentiate their products.

Luc Vandendriessche, Business Development Manager Bemis: Lately, we have noticed a move from rigid packaging towards full flexible packaging solutions (photo: Bemis)