

BAGS & PUNNETS

StePac Xtends into retail packaging

Following the success of the Xtend MA/MH range for bulk packed produce, StePac is taking its next step in the retail packaging market

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Israel-based packaging specialist StePac has extended its product line by offering its Xtend modified atmosphere/modified humidity (MA/MH) bags, lidding film, zip lock bags and peel and seal bags for use as retail packaging, branching out from its original bulk packed produce market. The bags can be used with a range of fresh produce, from fruits and vegetables to herbs.

In fact, as part of this expansion, the group has launched a marketing drive aimed at promoting the use of the MA/MH retail bags for herbs, as the Xtend packaging provides the perfect environment for the specific herb in the package, therefore perfectly meeting the needs of the consumer.

The Xtend technology optimises the atmosphere within the packaging by means of proprietary polymer engineering that is custom-made depending on the product, balancing the oxygen and carbon dioxide inside the bag and allowing moisture to escape at the same time. "Herb freshness and aroma is retained for longer than any other solution," says a spokesman. "The most popular herbs, including basil, chives, coriander, dill, mint, parsley, rocket, rosemary and thyme, remain fresh for 15 days in coldstorage with three additional days of shelf-life in chilled conditions."

Additionally, StePac has been preparing for the 2008 stonefruit and cherry seasons in Europe, with Xtend packaging expected to play a prominent role in fruit preservation. As well as maintaining fruit firmness, colour and taste, the packaging is designed to prevent internal breakdown and pulp browning, while also stopping the growth of micro-

apricots, nectarines and peaches for up to 30 days at 0-1°C, cherries for up to 45 days, and plums for up to 60 days at the same temperature," a group statement explains. "Customers can choose from standard or easy-tear Xtend bulk bags for loose fruit or punnets, Xtend zip-lock bags or Xtend lidding film for punnets."

Aside from the benefits of MA/MH on the contents of the packaging, its use by suppliers and retailers means a reduction in the amount of wasted produce throughout the supply chain, and reduced

The newly designed packaging has been created with presentation in mind, and is intended to be displayed as the centrepiece on a table at meal times or displayed prominently on the shelves at the supermarket, and eliminates the need to transfer the fruit into a separate container.

In addition, all of the packs use R-APET, a substance which contains up to 60 per cent fully traceable and recycled waste materials.

"When it comes to fresh fruit, the 'feel



Stepac's Xtend MA/MH packaging will be widely used during the 2008 European stonefruit season

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organisms that can develop during the storage and shipments stages of the supply chain.

"Xtend bags maintain high quality of

logistical costs thanks to the elimination of the need to quickly airfreight produce.

Meanwhile, in the UK, rigid plastic food packaging group Sharp Interpack has followed up the launch of its SPE range of

soft fruit punnets last year by introducing new three-cavity and mixed berry packs, in a bid to encourage the consumption of fruit among children.

good' factor kicks in," says a spokesman for Sharp Interpack. "Mums realise the value of including fresh fruit in their children's school lunchboxes and having a regular supply of fresh fruit at home on the dining room table. In a recent Produce for Better Health Foundation (PBH) survey, 90 per cent of mums questioned said it was important to include fruit and vegetables in their family meals."

With the media promoting the consumption of more healthy options and taking a more proactive stand on food, the time is ripe for manufacturers like Sharpak to suggest more uses for their fresh produce punnets. ■