



Packaging our produce for the future

Attending the PMA Packaging Seminar during August 2013 provided a few valuable insights into the market development potential within the produce industry through the use of innovative packaging.

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SUBTROP

Lisa Cork, the owner of Fresh Produce Marketing in New Zealand and recipient of the 2013 PMA Australasia Produce Plus Marketer of the Year Award, presented "Packaging is not a cost; it's a marketing tool and so much more" at Fresh Connections Southern Africa.

She stated that the fresh produce industry is often guilty of not properly utilising packaging as a marketing tool, thereby losing out on wonderful marketing opportunities.

Developing the marketing potential

of packaging is important, because packaging is viewed by thousands of shoppers at the point of display and it has the potential to carry out the 'buy me' message, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year at no additional cost.

She stated that, in her experience working as a marketer in the fresh produce industry, packaging does not add its full potential marketing value if the brand / grower name dominates the pack and it restates the obvious (*you don't need a large illustration or photo of a mango on a bag used to sell mangoes*).

She is of the opinion that packaging should be used to advertise the reasons and benefits of why a shopper should buy the produce, thus driving value growth through the use of packaging that is aligned with shoppers' needs.

She suggested that producers should aim to achieve this by:

- thinking like packaged food marketers that constantly track market trends, seek data and monitoring new product development;
- understanding the product from a shopper's point of view; and
- utilising the full potential of the value of nutritional marketing.



Obvious it is plums, but where are the benefits of using it?





A brilliant example of this was given by Jacques Coetzee, Business Unit Manager at Export NZ BV based in the Netherlands, who presented “Setting the pace: Global trends in fresh produce packaging” at the seminar.

In his presentation he referred to the growing global trend of fresh food snacking. In his opinion today’s shoppers are more informed and health conscious than what they were a few years ago and that they are increasingly searching for healthy snack alternatives.

He highlighted an example of a Dutch tomato producer who took advantage of this trend and who, through the use of innovative packaging, turned a packaging problem into a packaging opportunity.

The producer was experiencing a problem whereby they were producing more and more small tomatoes that were not of a traditionally marketable size and thus not providing them with a profitable return.

After a visit to his local KFC and an order of KFC Sprinkle Pops he came up with a brilliant idea, ‘Snoeptomaatjes’ – snack tomatoes in an easily resealable snack packaging.

The sales of the tubs of snack tomatoes took off at pace, selling 2 million units in the year in which it was launched. Sales have since grown exponentially with more than 70 million units being reported as sold in 2012.

By being innovative and through analysing market trends (taking the health conscious consumer into consideration), Benelux growers have been able to tap into the snack market.

Producers who incorporate innovative packaging ideas in touch with current market trends into their marketing programmes, will have a definitive advantage. If there is any doubt about the validity of this statement in the fresh produce industry where produce is considered to be fairly generic, just ask producers of bottled water (the most commonly available resource in the world) about the value of properly branded packaging.

Sources

- PMA;
- Lisa Cork, Fresh Produce Marketing, New Zealand;
- Jacques Coetzee, Export NZ BV, Netherlands. 



Unmarketable small tomatoes were transformed into snack tomatoes (‘Snoeptomaatjes’) with astonishing results for a Dutch farmer.

