Mounting data debunks negative misconceptions on food packaging, and reveal how using protective packaging such as shrink wrap actually helps the environment.

(Newswire.net -- July 1, 2013) Toronto, ON -- In the world of agriculture and packaging, there are facts and misconceptions about the industry, the packaging methods used, and the relationship that exists between farm, table, and landfill. For instance, many an eco-friendly concerned shopper would feel that shrink wrapping a cucumber creates unnecessary waste that is bad for our environment. However, in reality there are many applications where food packaging is the better solution for our environment.

In a book titled “Why Shrink-Wrap a Cucumber?: The Complete Guide to Environmental Packaging” (Lawrence King, 2012) insights on packaging materials and processes with concern for the environment are provided. One application studied, included the shrink wrapping of a cucumber which revealed how the application extended shelf life freshness. In it, authors Miller and Aldridge explain that unwrapped cucumbers deteriorate much quicker than shrink wrapped cucumbers and provided evidence such as; how an unwrapped naked cucumber loses 3.5 percent weight after three days sitting out while a shrink wrapped cucumber only loses 1.5 percent weight after two weeks sitting out in the same conditions.

The authors Millar and Aldridge point out that even though a packaging application can help the environment, it may not be accepted by an eco concerned individual, organization or business. They shared a story about a newspaper that launched a national campaign against the shrink wrapping of cucumbers which then saw a supermarket change packaging despite the eco benefits. For those of us who know of the shrink wrapped cucumber benefits, it makes clear that many of us would do well to get better educated on food packaging and its impact on the environment, before making hasty judgements on what we THINK is better.

From Canadian research, there is, a report titled “Food Waste in Canada” by Value Chain Management Centre, it gives insight on the state of environment problems, waste, and recommendations based on compiled research. The report states that: “an estimated $27 billion in Canadian food annually finds its way to landfill and composting, creating unnecessarily high levels of carbon and methane. They explain that the economic loss translates into an estimated 40 percent loss of all food wasted. The report proposes that “More effectively managing the food already produced would significantly benefit the economy and the environment.”

In regards to concerns about plastic packaging, the report puts packaging into perspective and debunks misconceptions about where waste is coming from. It says:

- “Food waste creates methane gas which is 25 times more damaging to the environment than CO2 (carbon dioxide) (WRAP, 2010a;NOAA, 2008)

- More greenhouse gases created from wasted food by households than by plastic packaging

- Plastic packaging actually benefits us by reducing food waste and protecting food in transportation and handling

- The downside of plastic packaging is primarily not the material but lack of coordination at municipal level resulting in thousands of tonnes gone to landfill needlessly, increasing its carbon footprint unnecessarily"
In the Canadian Packaging Solutions Blog (http://solutions cpsupplyline.com), by the Packaging Specialists Crawford Provincial, a new post titled "Help End Food Waste with Food Packaging" discusses the huge issue of food waste in Canada, USA and the world, and how food packaging can and does help the environment by reducing wasted food. The post author, Mr Andy Craig explained the impact on Canadians in saying: “About 20 per cent of Canada’s methane emissions (a greenhouse gas that traps more heat in the atmosphere than carbon dioxide) come from landfills and the majority of these off-gases come from the fruit and vegetable waste that we create.” He continued with explaining the impact on Americans where he describes the situation stating: “In the US alone, the amount of water loss from food waste is like leaving the tap running and pouring 40 trillion litres of water down the drain.”

Author Mr Craig debunks misconceptions about food packaging in the post section titled: “The naked truth about how food packaging can help you waste less food”. Here he goes on to educate us on food packaging with powerfully insightful data, when he says: “88 percent of people believe that food packaging is a bigger problem than food waste itself, but when we consider the C0² emission rates, we see that Packaging is responsible for 11 percent and Food Waste is responsible for 89 percent.” He continues on this note saying: “Reality is much different than perception. Food waste is a massive problem in North America. Food Packaging is the safety net for food that helps to protect, cushion, save and extend the life cycle of that product, which in turn helps to reduce waste.”

As a packaging solution professional, Andy Craig points out that identifying the right packaging for an application is complex. However by getting the correct solution, Andy says: “the odds of that product getting to the consumer in as made condition is increased exponentially with the right choice of packaging”. Mr Craig explains that there are different types of packaging and that “Today’s specialty Food Packaging allows packaged foods to be protected from physical damage, light, air and temperature changes”. And while Mr. Craig does not give specific produce examples such as shrink wrapping a cucumber and the environment gains of this application solution, he does make clear such benefits exist when he describes shrink wrap film type packaging when he says “Cutting edge protective food films and containers allow fruits and vegetables to properly exchange gases to keep them ‘alive’ for extended periods of time, which allows consumers more time to enjoy them”. In the post, Mr Craig does not mention the use of food packaging equipment such as shrink wrap machines, however information on equipment and automation is available on the blog in posts under the tag ‘packaging equipment’ and in more depth on the Crawford Provincial Packaging Equipment Division website (http://www.cppackagingequipment.com).

Mr Andy Craig explains without current technology offering of “advanced food packaging nearly 85 percent of all fresh foods would not make it to market because of damage and spoilage”. As buyers and sellers learn more about the importance of food packaging for our environment it is expected more advanced food packaging technology will be in place to help the environment.

The bottom line is food packaging such as shrink wrapping cucumbers certainly does help the environment in that such solutions help reduce waste and methane gas. The future looks bright with ongoing advancements in packaging technology to support the environment along with our increasing knowledge enabling us to make optimal choices and plans that best support our environment.

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Media Contact: RPM TECH
1 Yonge Street Suite 1801
Toronto, ON, M5E 1W7
416-848-1530
info@rpm-tech.ca
http://www.rpm-tech.ca

Author: Google+ - Rachel McEneaney G+