

Pay Attention to the label on packaged fruit and vegetables!

Pre-packaged fruit and vegetables are a standard these days in the supermarket. But packaging is only complete when the right information is on it. IQ Packing, Netherlands and ESPERA can therefore mean a lot to each other.



At IQ Packing in Waddinxveen and Hazeldonk they pack vegetables and fruit. In Hazeldonk it is mainly soft fruit, such as blueberries, that goes over the packaging lines. In Waddinxveen it ranges from turmeric to ginger, from passion fruit to mango. And from week nine on, it will be aubergines, tomatoes, peppers and citrus fruit. They pack them like no other here. This is partly due to the machine park that IQ Packing has at its disposal. Flowpack, top seal, stretch foil, net packaging; name a package and IQ Packing can deliver it. "We are broadly oriented and very flexible. If customers call for an urgent job today, we can almost always tackle it", says director Rob Bondt. How is that possible? Because we have a lot of machines.

Taking risks

Rob is a pure entrepreneur, has an eye for trends and dares to take risks on this basis. He invested in Natural Branding, the laser technique used to burn information into the product. Three years ago, he bought a machine for packaging blueberries without even having a customer. Rob: "My shareholders had reservations. 'How do you know it will be a trend, do you already have customers?' Of course, I was not 100% sure that it was the right investment. But as an entrepreneur you have to dare to take risks. I noticed that supermarkets were increasingly asking for different volumes and that we had to repackage the pre-packaged blueberries from our international suppliers more and more. And so, I had to have that machine first. After all, fruit and vegetables are daily trade - if you have a new customer today, you have to be able to deliver tomorrow."

Labelling machine with weighing function

Another example of machines that IQ Packing has in the production hall are the fully automatic weighing and output machines (type ES 7001) from ESPERA. The weighing function ensures that the label is only applied if the minimum weight actually corresponds to the indication on the label. An employee manually fills cardboard trays with turmeric on a scale. Then they roll over the line where they are first provided with a flow pack.



After the double check on the scale the label with weight indication subsequently follows. When it comes to the harder type of fruit or vegetables, the machine can press more firmly. But if there are grapes on the line, then the machine stamps with special care.

Reliability



When the 'Holland season' arrives in week nine, the ES 7001 runs at full speed for peppers, the 3-in-1 bell peppers and tomatoes. What is ordered one day is often in a supermarket the next day. Whether it is winter, spring, summer or fall, Rob cannot afford machines that stand still. The reliable relationship he has with ESPERA's fruit and vegetable expert Mischa Schmitz is therefore vitally important.

"Offering a machine for an attractive price-quality ratio is not that difficult", he says. "What matters is what you have to offer at the moment that a fault occurs, while thirty pallets of peppers have to go out the next day. In these moments I know that I can count on ESPERA."

When it comes to fruit and vegetables, Mischa knows her stuff. "It's a very dynamic industry. That means that we too must be dynamic. If Rob has something in mind, he can call me and say, "I'll have that machine in three weeks!". In such a case I always provide a solution, virtually no packaging is too much for our machines.

Trends in packaging

Product packaging is a good way to distinguish yourself from your competitors and to generate emotion. According to Rob, the 'less plastic' trend is number one. "The trays of grapes don't have a lid any longer but now have foil. And plastic packaging and stretch foil are increasingly being replaced with apples in cardboard trays and lasered cucumbers. The disadvantage is that the shelf life is deteriorating and that you as a consumer cannot judge the quality of the product. The Dutch consumer wants less plastic, but is also spoiled with perfect products that do not have anything wrong and cardboard is less practical. So, we keep looking for the right middle ground."

Berries in shaker

In Hazeldonk, IQ Packing is responding to another important trend with the packaging of blueberries. The berries arrive at sea after two weeks and are packed cold in shakers (those small cups with candy fruit). Rob uses two ESPERA labelling machines, type ES 1223 and ES 1101. "Perfect machines to neatly label these cups on the side with a label", says Rob. And then quickly to the store, where the consumer is tempted to buy healthy sweets thanks to this packaging.