

Sustainability



Flavorite uses Rpak's packaging across a range of its tomato and cucumber products

Beyond the bottom line

Championing sustainable solutions requires an approach that prioritises longevity over short-term profits.

by Chris Komorek

When it comes to sustainability in plastics, Martogg's Ben McCulloch doesn't mince his words.

"We have a waste crisis here in Australia and much of the world," he says. "Stockpiles of waste continue to grow, and we have all seen the devastating effects of plastic on our environment. However, in saying this, plastic is inherently recyclable and therefore if recycled correctly, it can be reused into new products and packaging."

It's in recycled plastics where Martogg – an Australian-owned polymer distribution, resin compounding and plastics recycling company – is aiming to make a difference.

Martogg supplies its food grade recycled PET (r-PET), branded as marPET, to Australian-owned Recyclable Packaging (Rpak). Rpak turns the product into a thermoformed range of food packaging products, suitable for products including fresh fruit and vegetables.



Mike Nichol is eager to see greater uptake of recyclable packaging solutions across the industry

"Recycled PET is more expensive than virgin polymers and therefore Rpak and brand owners are looking beyond the bottom line of their business to provide consumers with the most sustainable packaging that they can offer and in doing so driving the circular economy," explains McCulloch, product manager of marPET at Martogg.

One of Australia's leading glasshouse producers, Flavorite, has used Rpak's packaging for almost five years. Products including its large tomatoes, cherry tomatoes and snack-sized cucumbers are packed in this recycled packaging, with more products lined up.

"We will look to pack blueberries in recycled packaging in the future," says Flavorite chief executive, Mike Nichol. "There are some products which lend themselves to PET packaging due to the conditions they need to be stored and transported in, but we are always looking at new and innovative packaging solutions to reduce the amount of virgin plastic we use and to stop more waste going into landfill."

McCulloch says studies have shown the use of r-PET material, when compared to virgin PET, can see a reduction of up to 79 per cent of carbon emissions.

"It's a win-win situation," he says, referring to the shift to recyclable plastics in packaging. "We cannot move away from plastic, it's used in too many different industries. For food packaging it significantly extends the lifecycle of products and decreases food waste, which is responsible for up to 6 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions.

"But the use of recycled content is critical and quite frankly we cannot continue down the old linear path of make-use-dispose. We must correctly recycle and reuse the waste we generate to reduce landfill, Co2 emissions and maximise the finite resource of plastic.

"The industry requires ongoing support and development in waste management to ensure that we are self-sufficient and can recycle the plastic waste that is generated locally," adds McCulloch.

Nichol is eager to see greater uptake of recyclable packaging solutions across the industry, but believes the biggest challenge is in the form of consumer awareness and education.

"We all have a role to play, not just in our business but in our homes and if Flavorite can help provide consumers with options that are better for the environment, we will continue to do so," he concludes.