

HEINZ INCREASES QUALITY AND SERVICE THANKS TO CRYOVAC PACKAGING SYSTEMS

In the increasingly competitive Foodservice business, packaging is of strategic importance as it can guarantee product safety and hygiene, increase product quality and have a significant impact on productivity and logistics. When it comes to packing pumpable foods such as sauces on a large scale, productive and hygienic packaging is of prime importance.

When the Dutch-based ketchup plant of H.J. Heinz contacted Cryovac several years ago, it was inspired by the positive track record of Cryovac systems in the USA. Heinz thus wanted to switch to Cryovac filling systems, confident that these were reliable and promised to increase performance.

H.J. Heinz is one of the world's leading Foodservice suppliers. Major products include tomato ketchup, mayonnaises, mustards, tomato-based sauces, soups and baked beans in tomato sauce. Major customers include Quick, Burger King and many other fast food retailers throughout the world. In the tomato ketchup Foodservice market, Heinz holds a European market share of 30 to 45%. With 38,600 employees, the multinational operates 200 plants globally. The Elst plant in the Netherlands is the leading plant for the European production of tomato ketchup and sauces.

The product range of the Elst plant includes tomato ketchup, mustards, mayonnaises as well as various types of sauces (hollandaise, remoulade, etc.). These products serve the European Foodservice industry throughout the continent. For many years, these products were being packed using a vertical filling system for cold fluids and an aluminium film. The system was limited to one size only and achieved a productivity of 10 packs per minute.

"We decided it was time to introduce more innovative and productive packaging", said Mr. Ruud J. Verwoolde, General Manager Marketing Northern Europe for Heinz. "Our strategy is based on developing a full system concept rather than just products, outpacing competition and providing customers and consumers with real convenience."

The organisation had recently been revamped to provide full focus on the needs of customers and users. This is why the Elst plant decided to test in Europe the Cryovac packaging technology which had proved successful in the US.

The benefits of the CRYOVAC® flexible pouch packaging systems are numerous. The unique combination of CRYOVAC® vertical form-fill-seal (VFFS) machines and high performance films create an ideal system for packaging cold-fill products such as dressings, sauces and condiments. The rollstock films made with Cryovac's patented multilayer coextrusion process are automatically formed into flexible pouches, filled, heat-sealed and cut to the programmed package size. These exceptionally strong, composite materials are specifically designed for use on automatic, high-volume form-fill-seal machines from Cryovac.

In the Heinz application, the chosen Cryovac VFFS concept is based on a CRYOVAC® 2002 A/FS machine and CRYOVAC® FS 7155 film. This high oxygen barrier film is ideal for packaging products with extended shelf-life requirements such as tomato-based sauces. The Cryovac machine is the next generation of Cryovac® form-fill-seal machines, designed to give food processors higher productivity and greater flexibility. It produces high-integrity, flexible pouches with no head space.

With the Cryovac system, the fluid products are filled in pouches of various sizes, ranging from 2.5 to 7.5 litres, resolving many capacity problems. A fitment option turns the flexible pouch into part of an easy-to-use, manual dispensing system ideal for condiments. Flexible pouches have greater shipping and storage efficiencies, virtually 100% product yield; no dangerous, jagged edges, and less solid waste volume.

"The Cryovac solution resolved many of the concerns and problems we were facing", commented Mr. Verwoolde. "Thanks to the flexibility in pack sizes, the capacity problems were eliminated and more types of products could be offered, thereby enlarging the product range and customer base. The production of pouches with no head space also helps avoid oxidation and product contamination, providing clean and hygienic pouches, increasing product quality and ensuring product safety".

This new solution also allowed Heinz to discard the previous aluminium-coated material which had encountered resistance in some countries for environmental reasons. Finally, the output per machine was significantly improved from 10 to 25 packs per minute, thus reducing packing cost and helping the company avoid a price increase. Another advantage is the transparency of the pouch, allowing the user to see the product and what remains during use.

The benefits were all encompassing, with a significant impact on product quality, safety, output and productivity. Following the introduction in March 2000 of the Cryovac solution, the Heinz plant management was extremely pleased with the switch and with the results, all of which headed in the direction of increased turnover.

Cryovac and Heinz worked hand in hand to ensure the system would fulfill all requirements. In addition to providing technical, sales and marketing support, Cryovac handled all system testing and partnered with ASEPT to develop a completely sealed fluid dispensing technology. ASEPT is a leading developer and marketer of portioning and dispensing systems for the Foodservice industry in Europe. This technology addresses many of the concerns, such as contamination, sanitation, expenses and labor that Foodservice end-users have expressed over the years.