

## Safeguarding resources with rPET – fruit and vegetable sales company Baumann is relying on sealed packaging from Sealpac

Fresh berries are suitable as a healthy snack between meals and are therefore a perfect fit for many consumers' to-go habits. This growing berry trend is also being noticed by Baumann, which entered the berry business back in 1995 with blueberries and now cultivates around 45 hectares of raspberries and blackberries. Starting this season, the fresh fruits have been packaged in trays made of resource-efficient rPET. These are closed with a thin, peel-off sealing film instead of a snap-on lid. How did the switch to automated tray sealing come about? We discussed this with Annika Baumann, managing director of Baumann Vertriebs GmbH, Sealpac area sales manager Jochen Paraquin and Stefan Dangel, head of sales and marketing at Sealpac.



Berry snack fit for consumption on the go: Baumann invested in the Sealpac A6 for resource-efficient rPET trays with top seal. (Photo: © Sealpac)

**Ms Baumann, you switched your packaging for fresh berries this season. What has changed and why did you do it?**

Annika Baumann: Around two years ago, the food retail industry specified a reduction in the amount of plastic used in packaging by June 2020. Amongst other methods, this was to be achieved using a top seal. At the time, we were supplying our berries in plastic trays that were fitted with a snap-on lid by hand. Our entire production process was geared to that and perfected, so we didn't actually see any need to change. Nevertheless, we complied.

**Starting this season, you are now packaging your berries in plastic trays made of resource-efficient rPET...**

Annika Baumann: The trays are sealed fully automatically with a film. Purchasing a new line has radically changed our processes and led to a range of advantages – some of which were unexpected.



Annika Baumann presents a cross-section of a cardboard box containing mixed berries. The rPET trays are sealed with a peel film equipped with ventilation holes. That ensures optimum moisture exchange in the packaging and good stackability  
(Photo: © Sealpac GmbH)

### How did you arrive at the appropriate packaging solution?

Annika Baumann: If, like us, you're not dealing with the issue of packaging on a daily basis, you discover that the market is vast and complex when you're looking for a suitable tray with top seal. There are so many different trays and sealing films that you're initially overwhelmed.

### Mr Dangel, as a Sealpac packaging expert, what are the questions that crop up here?

Stefan Dangel: As a rule, the trading partner makes suggestions regarding the packaging. The producer can take these into consideration. But how do you proceed then? Where do you start? With the packaging line, the tray or the film? This is followed by a lot of other questions: is inert gassing necessary? If so, which type? Is it necessary to reseal the packaging? And what additional equipment is required for weighing and labelling? We provided Baumann with full support in all of these aspects. That's part of the free service offered by our company.

### How did the cooperation with Sealpac come about?

Annika Baumann: In 2005, we purchased a first-generation Traysealer SP 350 from Sealpac for packaging asparagus. We're still using this line successfully and are very satisfied with it. Since then, we've enjoyed a good partnership with the company. That's why we also asked

Sealpac about a good machine for packaging berries. I was delighted at the expertise offered by Jochen Paraquin, who is highly familiar with the market and materials, and who provided me with neutral advice. Ultimately, we decided to purchase a fully automatic Sealpac Traysealer A6 in the medium output class.

Jochen Paraquin: As sealing packaging for fresh fruit is one of our newer segments, we paid a joint visit to Fruit Logistica to find out about the various options. And we stumbled across the rPET tray. Its material consists of collected, cleaned and chopped PET that's familiar from bottles, for example.

### **What are the advantages of the new packaging with top seal compared to a tray with snap-on lid?**

Annika Baumann: The retailers benefit equally as much as we do from the fact that the packaging can be stacked so easily. We can actually optimise our logistics even further thanks to more efficient use of the transport crates, because these can now hold at least twelve packs instead of the previous six. That will almost certainly be one of the topics in our autumn meetings with our customers. Increased resource efficiency is important to us as an agricultural production company and a real purchasing incentive for consumers who are focussed on sustainability. It's clearly apparent that less plastic is used for the packaging. The reliable seal also ensures that the tray is transported safely; to consume the berries, the sealing film can be easily peeled off from the tray.

Jochen Paraquin: I'd like to add another point about the safety aspect: the seal offers the consumer a guarantee that the packaging hasn't been opened before – something that a lot of consumers haven't just been paying attention to since the pandemic arose.

Annika Baumann: On the whole, we're very satisfied with our investment, which has led to a range of improvements for us, the retailers and end customers. We've actually accessed a new, and entirely unplanned, business area. As a contract packer, we are now also sealing trays for other producers that aren't yet able to keep up with the demands of the food retail industry.

### **You mentioned the topic of sustainability. How important is that at Baumann and do you have any other ideas for the future?**

Annika Baumann: We're checking absolutely everything to determine where optimisations are possible. That starts with the use of foil on the fields. In this case, it's often overlooked that our berry crops are in place for eight to ten years. That's also how long the tunnels are in use for on the fields. Our potted crops enable us to use water and fertiliser very sparingly. And our new packaging shows how rPET trays and the thin but very stable lid film can be used to save a significant amount of packaging material in comparison with the snap-on lid. This packaging solution makes us one of the pioneers in our industry.

Stefan Dangel: Sustainable packaging material is being talked about at all levels, but it's sometimes unclear whether that refers to plastic consumption, food packaging waste or the option of disposal or recycling.

Whatever the case, it also has to be clearly communicated to the consumer that each future measure, however important it might be, also comes at a price. That could be implemented

using a QR code, for example, which points out a product's particular sustainability to purchasers.

Annika Baumann: In the future, we want to set ourselves apart from the crowd with even more sustainability. We are planning to put our berries on the shelves in a sealed cardboard tray.

### **Is that a requirement that the new line could already meet today?**

Jochen Paraquin: Our Sealpac Traysealer A6 also processes cardboard trays with unre-served process reliability and is therefore highly suitable for implementing this project. Because they're completely printable, cardboard trays are outstanding for clearly communicating the increased sustainability aspect. Here, for example, the good separability and separate disposal of the cardboard tray and sealing film in the corresponding recycling collection systems could be pointed out on the packaging.

Stefan Dangel: One point which is important to us is that increased sustainability naturally also includes reducing food waste caused by spoiling. As machine designers, we can contribute to this with options for extending shelf life. The topic of MAP inert gassing for fruit crops still needs some development work doing, because too much vacuum causes the sensitive fruit's cells to burst. We're currently developing new ideas for maintaining and extending freshness for even longer.

Annika Baumann: We're interested in that, of course, and are eagerly waiting to see what developments Sealpac will be presenting in this regard. In terms of future applications, our line is already fitted with a facility for insert gassing.

### **Further information and contact**

#### **Casa Blanca Communication GmbH & Co. KG**

Hamburg

Tel.: 040 47 11 001-70

Mail: [diedrichsen@c-b-c.de](mailto:diedrichsen@c-b-c.de)

Web: [www.c-b-c.de](http://www.c-b-c.de)