Nestlé and Sonoco

SUCCESS STORY

Using Innovation to Drive a Circular Economy with PET Trays

SONOCO SUSTAINABILITY

THE CHALLENGE

Nestlé has long been committed to helping create a waste-free future and is finding ways to improve its packaging to be 100% recyclable or reusable by 2025. In the company's efforts to make its packaging as sustainable as possible, Nestlé sought to tackle a challenge with its black PET trays used for Stouffers' frozen prepared foods single serve trays.

Because the NIR (near-infrared) sorting technology typically used in recycling facilities throughout the U.S. sorts packaging by light reflection, dark packaging often goes undetected, and consequently, does not get sorted properly, meaning it may ultimately not be recycled. Working together with Sonoco, Nestlé aimed to produce a new PET frozen food tray for its Stouffers single serve product that had an increased ability to be recycled and appropriately sorted in a materials recovery facility (MRF).

THE SOLUTION

To support Nestlé's commitment to sustainability and recyclable packaging, Sonoco sought to find a solution with a tray that could continue to use recycled content and be detected and sorted by NIR detectors.

Sonoco worked to create a solution that would not only give the tray the ability to be recycled, but also ensure the color quality and consistency matched Nestlé's expectations. The new packaging would also need to maintain microwaveability, ovenability and frozen impact standards, as well as meet strict guidelines to ensure the quality and safety of the product remained high.

Sonoco created an important solution by designing an unpigmented tray, called the Natural Tray, that is NIR-detectable, contains 30% recycled PET materials, and has the ability to be captured in a MRF. Additionally, unpigmented material has a wider range of end markets than PCR material made from carbon black. The conversion also eliminates 80,000 pounds of colorant annually and drives an increase in the circularity of these trays.

By moving to the Natural Tray, Nestlé can maintain H2R Check Local status and moves closer to its vision that none of the company's packaging, including plastics, ends up in the landfill or as litter.

Interested in learning more about how Sonoco can help you with your sustainability efforts? Contact us at Sonoco.Sustainability@sonoco.com today!

Stouffer's

SORTING TECHNOLOGY WASN'T RECOGNIZING BLACK PET TRAYS

PACKAGING NEEDED TO BE DETECTABLE BY NIR TECHNOLOGY BUT MAINTAIN PREVIOUS FUNCTIONS

NATURAL TRAY WAS CREATED, NIR DETECTABLE AND CONTAINS 30% RECYCLED MATERIAL

"At Nestlé, we are constantly innovating to find ways to the extend the use of packaging materials as a resource and help drive a more circular economy," said Nicole Camilleri, Packaging Manager at Nestlé USA. "Removing the black pigment from our Stouffers single serve trays has the potential to make a big impact—not only are these trays made with 30% recycled plastic, but this pigment change increases the likelihood that the trays can be accepted at recycling facilities throughout the U.S."

ABOUT THE COMPANIES

Nestlé USA is committed to unlocking the power of food to enhance quality of life for everyone, today and for generations to come. The company's food and beverage portfolio is in nearly every home in the U.S. and includes some of the most recognizable brands such as Coffee mate, DiGiorno and Nestlé Toll House as well as category disrupters like Essentia and Sweet Earth. Nestlé USA also boasts the largest coffee portfolio in the U.S. with Nescafé and Starbucks Coffee. As part of Nestlé S.A. in Vevey, Switzerland — Nestlé USA has been named among Fast Company's "Best Workplace for Innovators" for two consecutive years. For more information, visit Nestleusa.com.

Sonoco, more than a 120-year-old packaging provider, specializes in all types of packaging, including rigid paper containers, flexible and rigid plastic for the food industry. The Company also provides recycling services, including operating four material recover facilities and 21 recycling facilities across the Southeast.

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