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Start-ups create the future at FACHPACK

“We create the future” was the slogan of FACHPACK 2021, and along with all the established companies showcasing their new products, this was especially true of the participating start-ups. The “Innovation made in Germany” pavilion, which is subsidised by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy, enabled start-ups to present their companies and product innovations to the professional packaging community.

A visit to the stands of start-up companies at FACHPACK 2021 gave a clear indication of where the future of the packaging industry lies and what issues are spurring young companies to develop novel solutions. One of these is sustainability and the other digital transformation.

More and more consumers are becoming concerned about the environment and are seeking out eco-friendly and sustainable products. In this context, packaging too needs to reflect the sustainability credentials of products and companies. This is why FairCup wants to revolutionise the market for packaging in the to-go segment with its deposit system for reusable cups (click here for pitch video in FACHPACK Newsroom). As well as in bakeries and cafés, the company’s reusable cups and food containers can be found at a lot of farmers’ markets and are thus reducing packaging waste.

Apart from recycling systems, readily recyclable packaging is another way of accommodating the zero-waste concept. But how can you be sure that packaging developed with the best intentions can actually be recycled? Recyda aims to provide an answer to this question with its specially developed software solution (click here for pitch video in FACHPACK Newsroom). In future, the company’s database should be able to provide Europe-wide assessments of the recyclability of packaging used in the consumer goods segment and thus ensure transparency across borders.

However, there is currently still too much packaging that is difficult to recycle or cannot be recycled at all. This applies especially to multi-material flexible food packaging. The various materials do perform an important function, and

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that is to protect food from oxygen and thus prevent spoiling. With its special coatings, Aegis Packaging is reconciling the demands of product protection and recyclability. The company's O_2X™ coating has an ultra-high oxygen barrier that offers solutions for the circular economy by enabling aluminium foil, PET and nylon to be replaced by PP or PE.

In the scientific community, there is still a lot of intense debate about how quickly petroleum-based biodegradable packaging is eliminated from the environment and what impact it has on ecosystems. This question can be easily sidestepped by following the example of Woodland Packaging and Puregreen relying on 100 percent plant-based and compostable materials. Whereas Puregreen uses sugarcane as the raw material for its takeaway packaging, Woodland specialises in MAP-compliant (modified atmosphere packaging) packaging made from wood.

Increasingly, fresh foodstuffs are also being sold by online retailers. Good insulation is necessary to make sure that the temperature-sensitive contents are still fresh by the time they are received by the customer. A simple and effective solution is to use expanded polystyrene (EPS). Munich-based company easy2cool has dedicated itself to finding an insulation material with a low environmental impact for mobile cooling. The start-up company's solution consists of recycled wastepaper from the paper manufacturing process. The good insulating properties of the cellulose material and its easy recyclability contribute to the quality and sustainability of the innovation.

But it's not just foodstuffs that need special protection; pharmaceutical products and chemicals do too. To allow the chemical and pharmaceutical industry to also practice sustainability without compromising on safety, Packengeers has set out to develop a special cardboard packaging system for industrial packaging. The resulting product reduces the carbon footprint by more than 50 percent compared with conventional solutions and is officially approved for the highest category of hazardous goods. LOKCID has developed a special transport box to allow the recycling rate for industrial packaging to be further improved. The company's fully recyclable packaging offers the great advantage of not just being custom manufactured for a particular product, as if very often the case in the industrial packaging sector, but that it can also be adapted universally to the dimensions of various components and assemblies.

In the entire packaging industry, you'll meanwhile hear the motto "Reduce, Reuse, Recycle". Numerous variables in the respective manufacturing processes can be leveraged to reduce packaging material. One option is the more efficient die-cutting of plastics. A multi-cut tool from Rohrer-Tools has been designed to produce as little waste as possible when die-cutting PP, PET and PLA base films.

A breath of fresh air for digitalisation

The second major trend at the start-up stands can be put in the category "Digitalisation and the Internet of Things". The concepts being developed by these young companies cover the entire supply chain and range from smart codes to matchmaking for entire projects. What they all have in common is that the developments simplify existing processes. At Samplision (click here for pitch video in FACHPACK Newsroom) this begins with the labelling of tubes in laboratories. The company's new software automates the complex labelling process and helps laboratories to document their processes without paper.

The data contained in codes is increasingly complex due the many requirements such as traceability, which also makes these codes complicated to produce. Artflex (click here for pitch video in FACHPACK Newsroom) aims to make this process fast and easy using an app. To this end, the start-up has developed a plug-in for Adobe Illustrator and InDesign to produce complex barcodes, QR codes and data matrix codes. These codes are indispensable to keep track of things within companies and over and beyond global logistics chains. Box-ID (click here for pitch video in FACHPACK Newsroom) uses codes for example to monitor valuable goods in global goods transport with its asset tracking/locating system. However, the solution also combines other digital functions like RFID transponders, to identify and prevent shrinkage in the transport chain. Aspion is pursuing the same goal with its data logger, which also identifies transport load factors and environmental conditions that can lead to damage. It is possible, for example, to determine exactly where in the transport chain something has gone wrong. In the container management and logistics segment, NXTGN has also found its niche. As well as offering track-and-trace functions, the company can also collect other sensor data e.g., on the fill levels of IBC containers, and make it accessible on its software platform.

With artificial intelligence and machine learning, two of the key areas of Industry 4.0 were also represented. Deevio aims to automate visual

inspections through its AI algorithm and has developed various tools focusing on the quality control process at the end of the production line. The approach taken by Peerox (click here for pitch video in FACHPACK Newsroom) is to combine artificial intelligence with the wealth of human experience and thus offer helpful support in the event of machine malfunctions. The company's MADDOX software recognises malfunctions based on complex machine data and associates these conditions with empirical knowledge that is then passed on the user. This means that digitisation doesn't just connect things but can also promote knowledge-sharing between experts. This is also something that the founders of Packpart (click here for pitch video in FACHPACK Newsroom), which is transferring the principle of matchmaking (dating) services to the realisation of projects, is also well aware of. The start-up is connecting packaging machine manufacturers and contract manufacturers with users, allowing them to find suitable partners online for specific projects.

Start-ups are known for tackling major challenges with minimal resources and innovative ideas. These young companies, characterised by their desire for more environmentally friendly solutions and their affinity with digital tools, are showing us where the trends are heading.

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