

Export packaging: travel insurance for global freight transport

Transport packaging is a cornerstone of global trade: Without boxes, pallets or corrugated board, freight transport would come to a standstill. Export packaging ensures safe, fast handling of goods of all sizes delivered to destinations all over the world. As well as protecting the goods, the packaging has to meet the needs of the various participants in the supply chain: Freight forwarders, logistics companies, shippers and customers expect handling to be simple and cost-efficient. One of the ways in which the manufacturers of transport packaging meet these requirements is by offering standardised products such as wooden boxes for light or heavy loads, single or double pallets, crates, corrugated cardboard sheets and boxes, bubble wrap and industrial shrink film, polyethylene film and aluminium foil. Suppliers of a wide range of export packaging will be presenting their solutions at FachPack in September 2018.

Getting ready for the digital transformation

The Association of Corrugated Board Manufacturers (VDW) reports that two-thirds of all transport packaging is made from corrugated cardboard. This kind of export packaging is inexpensive and light, but it is also strong and reliably cushions impacts. For heavy goods, heavy-duty corrugated board can be used to protect the products during land, air or sea transport. Other advantages of this type of packaging are its suitability for storage and ease of recycling.

The corrugated board sector is also getting ready for the digital transformation: In 2017, the VDW carried out a survey in conjunction with the Fraunhofer Institute for Material Flow and Logistics (IML). It found that in future, transport packaging will not just carry information but will actually generate information itself. The packaging as such will share data at various points in the supply chain and constantly monitor its contents.

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These automatic ID systems include RFID technology, for example. The data obtained can be used to further improve the supply chain. “In future there will be a demand for sensors that provide information about the nature and impact of any transportation stresses,” explains Christiane Auffermann, expert on commercial logistics at the Fraunhofer IML Institute who was in charge of the survey. Experts also expect that 3D printing will make it possible in future to customise packaging to produce strong packaging with less material. As part of the supporting programme at FachPack, companies and institutes will once again explore and enlarge upon the latest trends in transport packaging. In this context, brief presentations, discussions and special shows will provide new inspiration for the use of different packing materials and technologies (www.fachpack.de/programme).

More in demand than ever

As well as corrugated board, wood in the form of standard pallets and wooden boxes is commonly used for export packaging, providing two essential means of transport for global logistics. Adapted to standardised sea containers, most items begin their journey to the customer on this kind of pallet. The demand for pallets and wooden boxes is matching the growth in production and export activity. “Overall, the significant rise in production volumes reflects the good economic climate, which has led to greater demand for wooden load carriers and packaging in Germany and increasingly, in other countries,” says Marcus Kirschner, Managing Director of the German Association of Wood Packaging, Pallets and Export Packaging (HPE).

New approaches to automation and traceability

The digital transformation offers great potential for commercial logistics. Suppliers of pallets are currently looking into the technical possibilities of the blockchain, a distributed database technology in which data cannot be modified, directly retrieved or deleted. Originally devised for cryptocurrency transactions, the technology is increasingly being tested for production processes and in logistics.

In the meanwhile, the industry organisation for standardisation GS1 is conducting a pilot project with companies from trade, industry, logistics, IT and the research field to investigate to what extent this technology can facilitate paperless load carrier management. According to GS1, a successful implementation of this technology would be a quantum leap for the sector. Today, the pallet note is still part of the daily routine of every truck driver. The new technology could offer lots of new options for automating processes and ensuring traceability.

About FachPack

FachPack is the European trade fair for packaging, processing and technology. With its extensive range of products and services relating to the packaging process chain for industrial and consumer goods, the event will be held in a compact three-day programme running from 25 to 27 September 2018. FachPack is fresher, stronger and has a higher profile with its new brand identity “Tomorrow begins when you create it”. It will be just as solution-oriented, specific, reliable and pragmatic as ever. With a unique portfolio made up of packaging materials, packaging accessories, packaging materials, labelling and marking technology, peripheral packaging machinery and equipment, packaging printing and finishing, intra-logistics and packaging logistics and services for the packaging industry, FachPack is the meeting place for the European packaging market. It draws trade visitors from all packaging-intensive sectors: food and beverages, pharmaceuticals and medical technology, cosmetics, chemicals, automotive and other consumer and industrial goods.

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