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By Carl Collen

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## Xflow packaging available for blues

Stepac's functional blueberry packaging designed to reduce waste and cuts costs



**S**tepac is launching Xflow, a patented, functional, flowpack solution for blueberries, as a cost-saving alternative to traditional preformed bulk packaging.

According to the Johnson Matthey-owned group, Xflow "meets market trends to reduce waste through the supply chain, save labour costs, and use leaner plastic packaging".

Blueberries in clamshells are typically manually pre-packed and sealed in modified atmosphere packaging, a packing process that can be labour-intensive, with Stepac keen to provide a solution that would enable a reduction in labour costs.

"Xflow is a next-gen automatic package that saves time and money while reducing the amount of plastic

used by up to 40 per cent," explained Gary Ward, technical development manager for StePac.

Xflow combines the modified atmosphere/modified humidity (MA/MH) properties of its Xtend packaging in a film that also contains a unique sealing layer, making it compatible with conventional flow pack machines.

With the Xflow system, 12 clamshells are transported on a conveyor belt into the flowpack machine, where they are wrapped with the Xflow film, then sealed before being placed in the carton.

This solution reduces labour and film costs, plus results in a "more attractive package", and improves horizontal airflow across the cartons – important for efficient cooling and cold-chain management.

Xflow is designed to significantly extend the freshness of fruits, vegetables, and even fresh flowers by providing the MA/MH feature that slows respiration and ageing, while inhibiting microbial growth. It also reduces dehydration and weight loss during storage and shipping.

"We specifically developed this packaging solution to help Peruvian exporters attain more efficient automatic packaging for blueberries," added Ward. "Other customers are currently conducting commercial trials with Xflow for spring onions and green beans and we expect many additional produce items will benefit from this advanced solution."