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Berry packaging under the spotlight



The packaging panel discussion at GBC 2020

Expert speakers from the berry packaging industry came together at today's Global Berry Congress

With public pressure on retailers and their suppliers to limit the amount of plastic used in their supply chains, the sustainability of berry packaging was very much in the spotlight at Global Berry Congress 2020, which took place today (10 December).

Dirk Wens, president of Belgian BioPackaging, insisted that the industry needed to avoid simply greenwashing in order to satisfy those calling for more eco-friendly options.

"Sustainability is a mixture of people, profit and planet," he argued. "If you want to make packaging more sustainable, you have to source your material in a sustainable way. We need material that respects future generations – made from renewable resources or at the end of its life recyclable or compostable. But it should also be affordable and profitable."

Alessandro Mariani of Infia agreed that minimising the number of raw materials used for packaging was key.

"It is much more sustainable than in the past, but of course we are not there yet," he said. "It's all a matter of recyclability, and that means the packaging needs to be recycled in those different waste streams in different countries. We need to go further into making existing packaging more uniform and more mono-material."

According to Javier Navarro of Groupe Guillin, it made sense for all companies to promote a circular economy for packaging.

"As Alessandro says, we are not yet there, but we have done a lot – for example by decreasing pack weights and moving towards heat-sealing, which has saved lots of kilos of plastic."

Massimiliano Persico, head of strategic marketing at Carton Pack, suggested sustainability wasn't simply about removing plastic. "It must be something to do with costs, welfare, social commitment and so on."

His colleague Massimo Bellotti said more

would need to be done to meet the market demand for less plastic while retaining its benefits in terms of food safety and minimising waste.

"Plastic packaging can also be sustainable, so in terms of our offer we are trying to reduce it, not eliminate it," he commented. "North America and Europe are committed to reducing plastic, but the real action is different. They have moved a little towards heat-sealed, but in reality they still use 90 per cent clamshells. So there is still a lot to be done. The whole industry - retailers manufacturers and consumer organisations need to work together to find the best system."

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