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**Retailers Report Increased Use of
Corrugated Common Footprint for Produce**
Food Service Industry Shows No Interest in RPCs

INDIANAPOLIS, IN (August 11, 2003) – A new study reveals that a substantial number of major grocery retailers nationwide expect to increase their use of the Corrugated Common Footprint for produce, while decreasing use of reusable plastic containers (RPCs) and traditional waxed corrugated shipping containers. The study included in-depth discussions with food retailers and foodservice distributors. Willard Bishop Consulting, Ltd. (Chicago) conducted the study on behalf of the Corrugated Packaging Alliance (CPA).

Forecasting Container Usage

On average, the retailers surveyed forecasted increasing use of the Corrugated Common Footprint from a current level of 20 percent of their total annual produce case volume, to 25 percent of shipments in the next 18 months. The same retailers expect to drop RPC use from 8 percent to only 5.6 percent of their annual case volume in the same 18-month period.

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Traditional corrugated containers remain the dominant package of choice for produce. Retailers surveyed said that they currently use corrugated, including the Common Footprint, for 92% of their total produce case volume. The same retailers also said they expect to use even more corrugated 18 months from now, for more than 94 percent of annual produce shipments.

“This predicted increase in corrugated use includes a nearly 25% increase in the use of Corrugated Common Footprint containers, and a drop in the use of RPCs, by users who are finding that modular Corrugated Common Footprint containers offer better product protection for many commodities,” said Dwight Schmidt, executive director of the Corrugated Packaging Alliance.

Comparing Container Alternatives

The study evaluated factors contributing to packaging material selection and preference. Respondents indicated that RPCs add extra weight, increasing freight costs in the supply chain; provide unattractive displays that are inconsistent with company merchandising guidelines; and create new casepack issues and problems with the cost and tracking of container returns.

Retailers recognized Corrugated Common Footprint containers as offering superior displayability and product protection, resulting in less product damage in transit. Earlier, independent research studies have objectively documented corrugated’s

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superior protective qualities, showing significantly less bruising of strawberries, tree fruit and grapes shipped in corrugated vs. in RPCs.¹

Foodservice Industry Rejects RPCs

The study also included a survey of foodservice industry distributors, which collectively handle 51 percent of all produce distributed in the U.S., according to recent industry reports.

These foodservice industry respondents unanimously stated that RPCs are not currently used within their supply chains for produce or any other major category.

They further predicted that RPCs would not enter foodservice distribution in the next few years. The consensus was that RPCs won't work in a foodservice system because of the added burdens of container return and storage. Conversely, foodservice respondents indicated some interest in the Corrugated Common Footprint for some commodities, anticipating improved space utilization, stacking and handling.

Willard Bishop Consulting, Ltd. (WBC) offers a wide range of consulting services to companies operating in the retail and foodservice supply chains. For over 25 years, WBC has successfully guided clients through volatile and highly competitive environments. WBC's solutions produce competitive advantage and sustainable gains in sales and profits for its clients in manufacturing, retail, wholesale, and technology. WBC is committed to helping clients read and respond to changes in the market.

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¹ University of California-Davis studies sponsored by the California Grape and Tree Fruit League, the California Tree Fruit Agreement, and the California Strawberry Commission, supported with funds from the Fibre Box Association (FBA) and the Reusable Pallet & Crate Coalition (RPCC).



Corrugated Packaging Alliance



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The Corrugated Packaging Alliance (www.corrugated.org) is a corrugated industry initiative jointly sponsored by the American Forest & Paper Association (AF&PA) (www.afandpa.org) and the Fibre Box Association (FBA) (www.fibrebox.org). Its mission is to foster growth and profitability of corrugated in applications where it can be demonstrated, based on credible and persuasive evidence, that corrugated should be the packaging material of choice; and to provide a coordinated industry focus that effectively acts on industry matters that cannot be accomplished by individual members.

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