

Press Releases - March 6, 2000

Corrugated Modularity Standard For Produce Packaging Near Final Approval

Industry Feedback Favors 5-10-Down Footprint Design

ROLLING MEADOWS, IL (March 6, 2000) -- The Fibre Box Association's (FBA's) Corrugated Produce Container Modularity Standard (CPCMS) has moved closer to final approval, following a comment period in which retailers and grower/shippers were invited to provide input. The FBA Modularity Standard Task Force will continue testing the CPCMS in early 2000 and will seek final approval from the FBA's Board of Directors at its meeting on April 30. Details were discussed in a United Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Association (UFFVA) convention workshop (Saturday, February 26, 2000) entitled Packaging Containers: Issues, Challenges & Opportunities. Jim Keller, vice president and general manager, containerboard packaging and recycling for Weyerhaeuser Company (also FBA's first vice chairman and co-chair of the AFPA/FBA Competitive Materials Joint Steering Committee), presented the Modularity Standard. The CPCMS is also available on the FBA Web site (www.fibrebox.org).

The FBA unveiled a working draft of its CPCMS at the Produce Marketing Association (PMA) convention in October 1999. At that time, the FBA released two versions of the standard for industry review, each with a different footprint design.

Following extensive conversation and meetings with both produce and retail industry representatives, the Fibre Box Association is prepared to adopt the standard in its nominal 24/16 or 16/12 footprint ("5/10-down") configuration. (Five full cases, or ten half-cases, fit "down" in one layer on a standard GMA or Euro pallet.) The task force unanimously decided to recommend dropping the 6-12-down alternative from the standard at a January 20, 2000 meeting, to eliminate potential confusion inherent in a dual standard. This change was deemed very significant by the task force, which will remain active for at least two years to monitor the standard's use and ensure that it serves the interests of all stakeholders in the produce industry, including grower/shippers, retailers and corrugated suppliers.

The Corrugated Produce Container Modularity Standard provides for specified tab and receptacle sizes and locations so that the containers interstack, improving load stability. It also specifies an open area at the top of each case (or an easily removable lid). All other container design criteria, including styles, materials, colors, cooling/venting features, graphics and box height can be customized to meet specific application needs.

Advantages include mixed load interstackability, display readiness and optimal pallet fill, no matter who manufactures the corrugated cases in all key considerations in the supply chain as retailers strive for improved operational and merchandising efficiencies.

Standardization of produce shipping cases is widely viewed as part of the solution that retailers are looking for. With the CPCMS, all the advantages of standardization can be realized without disrupting a packaging system that has worked within the grocery/ fresh produce industries for years. Grower/shippers have established relationships with their corrugated suppliers and will not need to change them. There is no need to deal with cleaning, storage and back-hauling, since corrugated containers are one-way. Custom designs can be created and produced in fast turnaround. Graphics can be printed on corrugated boxes to provide brand identity and merchandising advantages. And the boxes are still recyclable, offering retailers the opportunity to continue earning extra revenue from the sale of OCC (old corrugated containers).

The Corrugated Produce Container Modularity Standard was developed by the FBA, with assistance from the American Forest & Paper Association (AF&PA), in close consultation with both grower/shippers and retailers. FBA members participating in development of the CPCMS include Gaylord Container Corporation, Inland Paperboard & Packaging, International Paper, Packaging Corporation of America, Smurfit-Stone, Weyerhaeuser and Willamette Industries, Inc.

The FBA Modularity Standard Task Force will continue to refine the CPCMS based on input and testing, but believes that significant or substantial changes will not be necessary. The final standard will be widely circulated to grower/shippers, retailers, related organizations and/or associations and any and all interested parties involved with the packaging, shipping and handling of produce. The Task Force seeks ongoing input. Send any pertinent comments to: Jim Nolan, Fibre Box Association, 2850 Golf Road, Rolling Meadows, IL 60008 USA (847) 364-9600, fax (847) 364-9639, e-mail jnolan@fibrebox.org .