

## Press Releases - August 9, 2000

### Standardized Corrugated Containers Endure Rigorous Shipping / Distribution Test With A&P

**(August 9, 2000)** -- FBA recently conducted a field trial with grocery retailer A&P to test performance of its new Common Footprint Containers (formerly known under its working name: Modularity Standard Containers) for produce packaging in real application scenarios. Results indicate significant improvements in arrival condition at both the distribution center (DC) and the store.

The trial was rigorous. Several different produce commodities were packed in Common Footprint Containers at five packing facilities in Florida. A total of 126 full pallets were built and then shipped 1,500 miles from the packers to A&P's DC in Detroit, over a period of three days. At the DC, the pallets were unloaded, repacked into typical mixed loads, and shipped out to an area retail store. All containers arrived at both the DC and the store in excellent condition, with no visible damage.

The boxes were made by several different corrugated manufacturers, meeting the FBA Common Footprint Standard specifications but otherwise customized for each commodity, as they are in real applications. Boxes included in the test varied in size (5 and 10-down footprints), depth and design, and were engineered to accept the same volume of each product as in normal practice. Some were display containers (at least 60% open top); others were non-display shipping containers (with various types of lids).

Corrugated packaging is typically designed to optimize space efficiency and product protection for specific contents. The FBA Corrugated Common Footprint Standard specifies footprint, and size and locations of tabs and receptacles for interstacking, but allows for infinite height variations, vents and hand-holds, board weights, coatings and so on. Some commodities are usually packed in one layer, others in two or more; heavier products may require smaller or stronger boxes. Containers are designed to optimize fill with minimal head space, creating more space-efficient pallet loads and truck utilization.

Commodities shipped in the trial include eggplant (18 or 24 count), cucumbers (72 count), bell peppers (23# net weight), green and yellow squash (20# net weight), grapefruit (in three common pack counts: 27-count, 40-count and 5# bags), oranges (80 count and 4# bags), and tangerines (120 count).

Oranges, along with several other commodities, were packed into Common Footprint Containers in five different grower/shipper packing facilities. Individual Common Footprint Containers were designed to fit their intended contents with typical case counts, container depths, vents and other protective features. Mixed load pallets were built for shipping to the A&P distribution center.

Pallets arrived at the distribution center, 1,500 miles away, in excellent condition. No product or container damage was observed. Finally, shipment was received at the retail store. Pallet loads remained intact and product was protected through the entire distribution chain.

"All pallets received at both the DC and store arrived in excellent condition with no container or product damage. Pallets arrived neatly squared and blocked off. The condition of containers and product can also be attributed to use of corner boards and/or netting and skid sheets, and to a well-supervised loading procedure," said Warren Sheetz, Category Manager, Eastern Region of A&P. "Store associates said they do feel that product packed in these types of containers will help reduce shrink, possibly due in part to less layers of product packed, easier rotation of product and better loading and shipping capabilities from the warehouse level."

The FBA unveiled a working draft of its Common Footprint Standard at the Produce Marketing Association (PMA) convention in October 1999. The FBA Board of Directors approved the standard for final adoption in July 2000.

Common Footprint 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 new Common Footprint, 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's 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 Common Footprint Standard was developed by the FBA, with assistance from the American Forest & Paper Association (AF&PA), in close consultation with grower/shippers and retailers. FBA members participating in development of the Common Footprint include Boise Cascade, Gaylord Container Corporation, Inland Paperboard & Packaging, International Paper, Packaging Corporation of America, Smurfit-Stone, Weyerhaeuser and Willamette Industries, Inc.

In September 2000, 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. For information, contact Jim Nolan, (847) 364-9600, fax (847) 364-9639.