EXTRUPET’S R20 million-plus investment to produce ‘food-grade’ recycled PET appears to be paying dividends. With an output of about 500 tons of rPET a month, the Extrupet plant in Wadeville is achieving targeted output. But they’ve had to work hard for it. In order to gain ‘food-grade’ approval from retailers such as Pick n Pay and Woolworths, Extrupet had to go beyond ISO certification to the BRC (British Retail Consortium) HACCP (Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point) standard. BRC, one of the most highly regarded international standards for food manufacture and food grade packaging, implies major hygiene and procedural

Pick n Pay uses 25% rPET in housebrand products

Pick n Pay are doing their bit to ensure that packaging material is used in a sustainable manner and has encouraged packaging manufacturers to embrace the relevant substrate logo on the various components of the packaging in an attempt to promote recycling amongst customers.

By August 2011, all packaging used for Pick n Pay housebrand products will be embossed with the relevant substrate logo, the start of Pick n Pay’s effort to advise customers whether the packaging bought can be recycled.

Pick n Pay has successfully completed trials to include a minimum of 25% of recycled material in their packaging in an attempt to reduce waste and landfill. Some of these completed trials include the range of PnP Ice Tea Concentrate, PnP Fresh Juices and PnP Ranges of condiments. This project will be extended to various other products once the availability of rPET improves.

Pick n Pay are sourcing as much packaging material as possible from recyclable sources. This includes using FSC material (which gives an information trail about the sources. This includes using FSC material and permeated into the material. Then, in the ‘food grade’ rPET plant, removal of other contaminants such as labels, caps and wads. By the end of this stage the ‘PET’ material is already a consistent quality, but there remains a small risk of contamination by volatile substances which may have been deposited in containers by consumers and permeated into the material.

Hilfort produces wide range of containers with PET dosages of up to 25% and even higher

THE Astrapak company Hilfort Plastics is leading the pioneering project to include recycled material in food packaging, a new trend in South Africa that is being driven by retailing giants Pick n Pay and Woolworths.

The retailers want as much as 25% of recycled PET (rPET) used, and Cape Town-based Hilfort has invested in the technology and systems to make this possible. Hilfort general manager Robin Olrich said Astrapak had made a “conclusive decision to take this big step”.

It is sourcing the rPET from Extrupet of Johannesburg. Hilfort first used small percentages of rPET, but has since steadily increased the dosage as it emerged that including the recycled material did not pose as many problems as had been anticipated. It is producing a wide range of containers with rPET dosages of up to 25% and even higher.

The converter has successfully moulded containers with up to 50% rPET. Containers for carbonated beverages are at present excluded from the programme as the IV is currently considered too low. To expedite the process, Hilfort recently installed a highly versatile blowing system from Symetrix; the doing and blending of rPET. Symetrix, through local representative Trolip Machinetechniek, also supplied the piping and conveying system. The Symetrix CD™ 800 batch blender is able, as its name suggests, to convey, dose and blend up to 1600000 litres per day, giving Hilfort the capability to significantly improve control of the process. To achieve consistent wall thickness and stack finish, homogenous blending of the rPET is essential. Feeding to the hopper-driers on the machines is automated by the Symetrix system and all data is recorded.

Hilfort has in fact gone one step further and is now also blending its in-house regrind into the nature of operation and reliable performance.

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