

2 Packaging Terminology



Understanding Packaging Related Terms

Primary Packaging

Primary or sales packaging is that which surrounds a product when sold to a final consumer. It is the packaging that is most often seen by the consumer and that of which they are most conscious. Primary packaging is also in direct contact with the product which adds complexity in terms of food safety requirements, hygiene requirements, etc.

Primary packaging also includes packaging material that is included with the primary pack, such as a label on a jar, a cardboard sleeve on a tray, or a lid on a bottle. Primary packaging is also the packaging that the consumer will retain the longest, so it normally has the most information on it in terms of contents, branding, 'Best Before Date', instructions for use, etc.

Secondary Packaging

Secondary or grouped packaging is that which is used to collate primary units for ease of handling in the selling environment. Typically this packaging can be cardboard boxes or trays, or shrink-wrapped plastic packs containing a number of primary units.

Variations include shelf ready packaging which can be placed directly on a shelf in a supermarket for a consumer to pick from, or carry-out packaging such as a cardboard carry out case for multiple bottles of wine so that the consumer can carry the pack away.

Tertiary Packaging

Tertiary or transport packaging is that which is used to facilitate handling and transport of a number of secondary packs in order to prevent handling and transport damage.

Typically this packaging can be pallets, stretch-wrap plastic film or shrink-wrapped plastic hoods. This type of packaging could also include additional items such as cardboard corner guards, layer pads or pallet caps.

Consumer Packaging and Industrial Packaging

Consumer packaging is designed to attract a consumer in a retail sales environment. Alternatively, industrial, or business to business packaging is designed to deliver

goods from one manufacturer to another. By its nature, industrial packaging will not be as prominent as consumer packaging and may be easier to change, as long as the product it contains does not become compromised.

Packaging Optimisation

In order for packaging to be optimised, primary, secondary and tertiary packaging must be considered as a total packaging system. Reducing one type of packaging is futile if a corresponding increase is required in another. For example, reducing the thickness of a primary plastic tub is meaningless if the secondary cases that the tubs are packed in need to be strengthened to prevent the tubs from being crushed.

