

Keeping pace with industry trends

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While stand-up pouches continue their march towards flexible packaging domination, and for good reason, they do pose a challenge for some coding and marking equipment.



Globally, brand owners are widely adopting stand-up pouches as producers can easily customise the size, shape and fitments to meet product, marketing and branding requirements. Stand-up pouches take up less storage and transportation space, offer excellent barrier properties and increase visibility on shelf for food, beverages, healthcare, personal and homecare, DIY and agricultural products.

Stand-up pouches have also been widely accepted by consumers who, according to industry studies, prefer their aesthetics, convenience and user-friendly fitments. More than ever, consumers are aware of the ethical and environmental impact of the products they purchase. Because pouches weigh less than rigid packaging formats, shipping costs are lower and brands can showcase their environmental responsibility.

Additionally, stand-up pouches make a statement at retail, and last year 165-billion were used at retail globally. Their annual growth rate is pegged at 7% and estimated to increase to 222-billion units by 2018. Africa has 5% of the global market.

There's no question then that stand-up pouches are here to stay. However, they do create a challenge for coding and marking operations.

The supply chain, a complex system of interconnected operations, forms the lifeblood of the FMCG industry. While there are many tools in use to manage the supply chain effectively, without accurate and efficient coding and marking, performance cannot be accurately measured. Coding and marking on primary, secondary and tertiary packaging ensures that the correct information is coded onto the right product to be read and verified without errors. Accurate coding and marking gives brand owners control, and ensures the authenticity and traceability of products throughout the value chain.

The structure of pre-made stand-up pouches can make them difficult to code. According to Brandon Pearce, Pyrotec PackMark's General Manager, non-contact continuous inkjet (CIJ) technology is a good solution for this application. "CIJ coding is ideal for coding small amounts of information, such as use by dates, traceability codes, logos and batch codes, as it efficiently copes with varying pack sizes and shapes while keeping up with line speeds," he explains.

For larger amounts of information, thermal transfer overprinters can be used to print onto the film before the package is formed. While offline coding is sometimes recommended for stand-up pouches, Pearce offers a word of warning. "Offline coding should only be done simultaneously as the packer fills the bag - the unit is placed on the conveyor where the CIJ printer codes the product. This does not pose any traceability issues because the packaging is coded immediately. However, if these pouches are coded before filling, this could create mix ups on the packing line relating to products' traceability, incorrect dates and batch codes."

Pyrotec PackMark provides a complete portfolio of world-class coding equipment for every category of packaging, including primary, secondary and tertiary coding and labelling solutions. "We offer a complete concept-to-application service that is cost-effective and practical, and our technicians are on hand to assist customers select the best coding, marking and labelling solutions to suit their requirements," Pearce concludes.

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