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Logistical packaging innovation for chilled fresh fish and seafood marketing systems to support the emerging circular economy

Packaging's logistical role in food marketing systems is becoming increasingly complex, especially in the modern retail environment that sources product from a highly globalized marketplace. This paper highlights packaging's strategically important role from a circular economy perspective, an appreciation of which can enable retailers, brand owners and packaging suppliers derive competitive edge whilst improving their sustainability credentials. In particular, these key stakeholders are under intense pressure to take action and help address the increasingly urgent challenges posed by single-use plastics waste and growing marine pollution concerns. These concerns include, amongst others, the increasing threat to wildlife and human seafood supply chains. Globally, 95% of plastics packaging material value is lost to the economy after a short first use and 32% of plastics packaging escapes collection systems. In response, several leading UK food retailers and brandowners have announced policies to reduce their plastics footprint. In addition, the EU has launched its new plastics strategy which seeks to integrate plastics into the circular economy. This development has been given added impetus by China's National Sword policy that imposes restrictions on the importation of recyclate with more than 0.5% contaminant. The paper will explore what scope exists in packaging logistics of chilled fresh fish and seafood to introduce biomaterial and reusable packaging as alternatives to single-use Expanded Poly-Styrene (EPS), or Styrofoam, packaging. This requires particular regard to protection from the hazards of transportation and invites consideration of the potential for new packaging systems and materials by challenging existing practices and involving collaborative partnerships.

Biography

Richard Coles launched his packaging consultancy, Emagine Packaging Ltd, five years ago with sustainability as a core brand value. He has over 30 years R&D experience in the food manufacturing and packaging industries gained with leading organisations from across the agri-food supply chain. He was recently involved with two Ellen MacArthur Foundation scheme circular economy collaborative research projects on pack eco-innovation. He is an Associate in Packaging at the Natural Resources Institute, University of Greenwich, for its MSc programmes in Food Innovation and Food Safety & Quality Management. He is an Associate Lecturer in Innovation & Design for the Open University. He is an Editor/Writer of book called "Food and Beverage Packaging Technology".

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