

Going the distance

Plastic packaging manufacturer Retal is actively working with a Nigerian food and agri-business customer in order to manufacture a PET preform that extends the shelf life of its popular refrigerated drinking yogurt in Africa.

As a result of its positive, collaborative relationship with a large agri-business customer, Retal is now adding the ColorMatrix Lactra SX Light Blocking Additive to its monolayer polyethylene terephthalate (PET) bottles for the multi-national producer's refrigerated drinking yogurt. These preforms are produced specifically for the Nigerian market, with the PolyOne additive blocking 99.9 per cent of light and protecting the dairy product.

ColorMatrix Lactra SX Light Blocking Additive in solid masterbatch form provides light blocking technology and

A food safe PET additive is ensuring a long shelf life for Lactra drinking yogurt in Nigeria

protection for liquid dairy contents when added to monolayer PET bottles. It is particularly suitable in packaging for ultra-high temperature (UHT) liquid dairy products, as these types of products have a longer shelf life, making them more susceptible to light-induced oxidation due to ambient storage conditions.

UHT dairy products require special packaging consideration for long ambient shelf life, which the additive can provide as a light blocking product.

Light blocking

Jiri Nydrle, sales manager at Retal Czech, is the customer's pivotal point of contact, with the project an example of how the company best likes to work, he says. Nydrle says, "Light blocking is a particularly hot topic in the African dairy market. At present, we only export this monolayer PET preform with the Lactra additive because there is not the current demand for dairy milk in PET bottles in Europe – cartons have a clear dominance in the UHT sector. We were delighted to receive a special request to create an ad-hoc solution as it allowed us to quickly integrate Lactra into our production."

Nydrle explains, "The brand owner in Nigeria had a break in its supply chain so we were asked to help by our long-term partner Caraway Africa Nigeria. The whole offer was discussed online and we were able to agree prices and arrange for 10 containers to be sent to Nigeria. It was a very effective method of communication and kept everything moving quickly; it shows a new way of working."

Foodsafe

With all the constituents of the solid masterbatch ColorMatrix additive certified as food safe, it

offers a way to extend shelf life without impacting the product quality; drinking yogurt in Lactra preforms has a six month refrigerated shelf life.

Retal European Union (EU) purchase director Arturas Scerbakovas notes the technical aspects of the additive allows the company to deliver on product performance, as well as price and delivery. He says, "Lactra does not need to be dried before processing; it is solid state pellets that are added as close as possible to the extruder entrance, and it creates an opaque white preform with an almost total light block. This makes it useful for dairy applications, when used in conjunction with the right process technology, including UHT milk that is stored at ambient temperatures, as well as the drinking yogurt in this particular project."

With Caraway Africa Nigeria continuing to work closely with Retal on ensuring it has the right products for the local market, Nydrle says this project has brought together its capabilities. He concludes, "This is our first experience of using this particular additive and we have found it very easy to use, we have not had any dosing problems."

"We are working with Lactra to manufacture light blocking preforms for the dairy sector; we've had excellent feedback from our customer in Nigeria and the whole project has been very positive, with the next shipment already under way. We expect to see continued demand for preforms with Lactra in other countries as it delivers excellent refrigerated shelf stability for dairy products without adding extra weight, as monolayer PET is used."

"It is also very attractive to customers as the opaque white is well suited to the visual cues of dairy, and it being easily recyclable in standard collections." **DI**



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