

Photo credit: Retal Films

Equipment Focus

Vikoriya Griziene,
general manager
at Retal Films



Reseal the cheese

With the cost of living crisis biting for consumers and the rise in energy costs impacting on everyone, the fact that waste is unsustainable – in the economic and environmental senses of the word – is just one of the drivers for practical packaging solutions for food.

A recent study shows that the EU now wastes more food than it imports, with around €150billion worth of food wasted each year. All waste is heartbreaking, but food waste is one of the most pointless and depressing, with the fact that around 829 million people go to bed hungry each night while all that food is being thrown away...and produced and paid for at a time when many can least afford it. It is a privilege to be able to throw away food - but we must not waste resources.

One way in which food waste can be tackled is by ensuring suitable packaging is used that compliments how consumers use the product. While we're all being encouraged to take lunch to work instead of shelling out on takeaways, or making sure we effectively use the produce we've bought instead of chucking out half-eaten packets of food from the fridge because it dried out and lost its appeal, it's a false economy if we don't fully use what we've paid for.

Vikoriya Griziene, general manager at RETAL Films, explains how the company has successfully created resealable packaging that's ideal for sliced cheeses and deli meats, "Developing resealable packaging is a huge technical challenge because it is important that the packaging offers the necessary barrier properties. Sliced

cheese needs the right environment inside the packaging; no moisture but not too dry either, so the product has a good shelf life, even after it's been opened and closed a number of times. We've conducted a wide range of technical trials to be sure that we can offer a range of top lidding and bottom film solutions that are resealable and recyclable."

Resealable and recyclable packaging for sliced cheese

That promise of 'resealable and recyclable' is crucial to delivering a viable solution that tackles food waste and environmental sustainability. Griziene continues, "Our customers in the dairy industry want to commit to sustainable packaging as much as we do, so by working together to understand the performance requirements of resealable packaging for sliced cheese and harnessing our long-standing technical abilities in creating recyclable film, we've been able to make a full mono solution with high barrier properties, and a resealable top lidding solution using mono APET."

With food packaging film producers often specialising in either bottom or top lidding film, or supplying both without provable guarantees for adhesion and

resealability, the complete solution from RETAL Films is welcome. Options include resealable mono APET top lidding film, and a full mono top and bottom solution with seal and peel. The bottom thermoformed tray element uses between 200-to-1200microns thick APET, representing the main material use for this type of packaging, with the top film only 33 – 90 microns thick, depending on the material.

Griziene explains the significance of this material usage in the ongoing focus on sustainability in food packaging, saying, "It's important that our customers have choice; with the bottom tray using the most raw materials, this is recyclable as packaging producers have focused on it. But to have a complete mono APET top and bottom solution for sliced cheeses and meats is really exciting. We produce it all in-house and offer testing of the total sealed solution too, so customers can realistically test how thoroughly the top and bottom seal and reseal. We understand the whole relationship; the sealing, the resealing. It's a complete solution."

This complete solution of resealable and recyclable packaging for sliced cheese is a practical step in reducing food waste at a time when neither the consumer nor the planet can afford it – and it's unlikely that either will go back to welcoming waste, so technically advanced flexible packaging for food will help us save valuable resources in more ways than one.

