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PrintWeek

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CONFERENCE

Plastics prove tough target for circ

After two days of the 11th Specialty Films & Flexible Packaging Global summit, it was clear that raw material suppliers and machine manufacturers have the tech-solutions. And yet, plastic proves proves to be a tough target for circularity. A WhatPackaging? report

Three themes resonated during the two-day session at ElitePlus. Speaker after speaker highlighted the importance of packaging for brand building, consumer trust, and brand authenticity. Almost everyone said that the packaging industry needs to provide solutions so that there is a convergence in next-gen purchasing power and eCommerce strategies in order to boost sales. Finally, there was a consensus that AI tools need to provide real-time analytics and precise production and shop floor capabilities.

In all this there was the overarching theme of packaging growth. Luciana Pellegrino, the president of the World Packaging Organisation said that the global packaging industry (valued at USD 1.3-trillion in 2024) will grow at 3.7% from 2026 to 2032. She alluded to the shift in customer



The ElitePlus summit was attended by 2,200 delegates, representing 840 organisations from 28 countries

expectations, with many seeking same-day delivery (60% of the millennials expect one-hour delivery).

Nadir Godrej, chairman and managing director of Godrej Industries, received a standing ovation for his address in verse which spoke about creating a purpose-driven brand and social responsibility.

Saugata Gupta, managing director and CEO of Marico, highlighted the role of packaging, noting the impact of eCommerce. He said that consumers are willing to pay 10% more for sustainable products. He felt India can be a leader in packaging design and waste management.

Jacob Duer, president and CEO of the Alliance to End Plastic Waste, said that the nonprofit has supported 80 global sustainability pro-

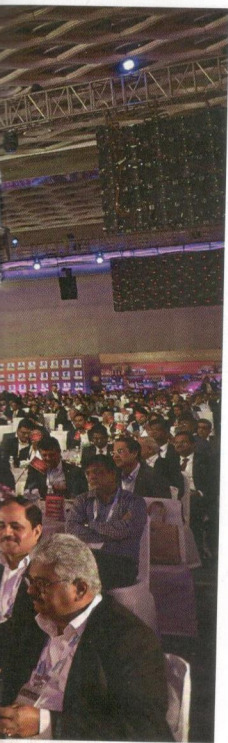
jects. He emphasised the importance of collaborations, highlighting the good work with Reliance, HUL, Uflex, and Godrej in India.

Ashok Chaturvedi, founder, chairman, and managing director of UFlex, traced the journey of plastic and the importance of multilayer for product safety. He spoke about the role of AI in plastic waste recycling and the collection of plastic waste based on real-time data.

Chaturvedi said, "How does one make packaging materials sustainable and circular?" Other than underscoring the importance of real time data, he said that the main thing was how industry bodies are struggling to agree on the terms like 'recycled' and 'reuse,' and this is creating confusion among consumers.



ular treatment at ElitePlus summit



Anand Kripalu, managing director and global CEO, EPL highlighted the company's India story of taking lam- itubes to the world. He mentioned the company's greenfield project in Brazil and how the factory was set up in 15 months. He said, "EPL is a rare example of a non-IT multinational that has made India proud across the globe." Kripalu spoke about EPL's endeavour to achieve Ecovadis Platinum status.

Nick Vafiadis, vice president of global polyolefins at Oil Price Information Service (a Dow Jones company), said the Indian economy, is projected to grow at 6.5–7% over the next decade. With per capita consumption of PE at 5 kg, 30% of the global average, there's growth potential. Post-Covid hygiene awareness is driving double-digit PE demand, while infrastructure development fuels HDPE pipe demand for water, gas, and 5G telecom.

The first panel discussion of the summit revolved around brand owners' perspectives, challenges, and opportunities in the context of packaging. This was followed by the business sessions.

Amol Lovalekar of the Hygienic Research Institute spoke about brand strategy in FMCG and recycling for circularity. Vijay Singh of SAI Food Products spoke about brand building. Divy Malik, a partner at McKinsey, provided a broader global perspective on the plastic waste crisis. He emphasised that there is a unique opportunity for India to "build it right" with a focus on recyclable and sustainable packaging designs.

Satyendra Kumar, the director of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change delivered his address. His presentation provided an overview of India's multifaceted efforts to address the growing challenge of plastic pollution.

One of the key highlights of his address was the scale of plastic usage across various sectors in India. According to Kumar, packaging accounts for 40–43% of plastic consumption, with the remaining used in consumer goods (26%), infrastructure and buildings (20%), and other applications. This underscores the importance of the packaging industry in driving sustainability.

Two panel discussions were of importance. The one moderated by Jeevaraj Pillai of UFlex asked the all-important question — is India ready for recycling? The panellists discussed this in the context of the drivers, challenges, and barriers to recycling in India. After which Anshul Khandelwal of Reliance New Energy moderated the critical role of flexibles, both in terms of materials and technology, in green energy.

The takeaway was: Circularity must be economically sustainable. But how does one manage the balance sheet when recycled resin is more expensive than virgin resin; and rPET is 20% more costly. The panel concurred that the complexities in achieving true circularity. Also circularity does not offer a value proposition to the consumer.

In the business session, Mahendra Patel of Mamata Machinery spoke about emerging film extrusion technologies in the context of sustainable flexible packaging solutions. Johann Kreiling of Brückner Maschinenbau spoke about biaxially-oriented line concepts for packaging applications in the context of the specialty film market. Marcel Perrevort of the Reifenhäuser Group spoke about performance efficiency in film extrusion.

On day two, Kunal Bajaj of Jupiter →



(l-r) Lucia Pellegrino, Nidhi Verma, Saugata Gupta, Jacob Duer, Nadir Godrej, and Ashok Chaturvedi



The founder of Haldiram's India, Shivkishan Agrawal, was felicitated at the summit, in recognition of his lifetime achievements.

Group called for global standards in flexible packaging and vendor approvals. He said, "Just like Hallmark for gold and FSSAI for food, packaging materials that need laminate should require quality certification."

There were three panel discussions on day two. The first one was moderated by Marzban Thanevala of SB-Constantia Flexibles, and was about aligning product development to circularity needs. The second panel discussion was moderated by PN Sridharr, general manager of ITC's Paperboards and Specialty Papers Division. The panellists discussed flexible packaging with alternative materials.

All the panellists were clear that their ultimate goal was the responsible use of materials and recyclables, and making the supply chain much more efficient. Meanwhile, companies continue to invest in new production facilities. The good news is, much more emphasis was placed on recyclable and material-reduced products, and in the expansion of capacities and technologies for compounding, regranulation and chemical recycling. Parallely, intensive work is being done in the development of PPWR-compliant packaging solutions and sustainable product design.

The final panel discussion was moderated by Cyril Ruiz-Moise of Bobst. The panellists spoke about the technologies and applications for the product authentication industry, especially in the context of anti-counterfeiting in India.

Ankit Jain, senior vice president of supply chain at Flipkart, provided the eCommerce perspective on packaging sustainability. Notably, the company now uses 20% of the packaging it did in 2019, by optimising the packaging to just that which is needed — what it calls best-fit packaging.

Hermann Veismann, managing director of the business unit of printing and finishing at Windmüller & Hölscher, talked about the company's perspective of a circular economy — which includes thinner, recyclable substrates, reduced colours in packaging design, and recycling-friendly inks.

A Appadurai, country business manager of HP Indigo India, highlighted how the HP Indigo 20000 has 40–65% lower environmental impact than CI Flexo and Gravure systems across all categories for a 3,000-sqm coffee pouch job. Hence, a more sustainable choice for flexible packaging.

Automation took precedence as Pau Xifra, managing director of Spain-based Comexi, shared the innovations the company has made in automation for packaging, with solutions ranging from automatic adhesive re-adjustment to automation in slitting.

The Shrimanker siblings, Vasu and Yash, of Pelican Rotoflex reported

growth with more than 80% repeat customers, 500+ employees, 1,100+ global installations, and Rs 2-billion in revenue last year with a CAGR of 14%. Its Rajkot facility spans 25 acres, with 25 more acres acquired in Ahmedabad for expansion.

Francesco Peccetti from the Italian-based Colines, delivered the last address of ElitePlus — highlighting innovations in cast film extrusion for sustainable film solutions.

ElitePlus: The take-away

There were two questions which emerged at the conclusion of the ElitePlus summit. The lack of proper facilities for safely disposing of waste is a huge obstacle. Many speakers alluded to the fact that the problem is exacerbated by ineffective laws and bans on plastics that aren't logistically enforceable. While these regulations are meant to help, they often miss the main causes of waste issues and end up putting too much responsibility on consumers.

The importance of creating policies that are practical and based on science should benefit both producers and consumers. It is seen that "reduce, reuse, recycle" is a familiar mantra, but there are sharp disagreements over which to prioritise. Then, there is the challenge of geopolitics, because of which a petrochemical glut has made new plastic cheaper than recycled. The surge in manufacturing in China and the US which has led to oversupply of products such as polyethylene.

The industry must urgently address the tension between profitability and sustainability. ■

INDUSTRY SNAPSHOT

- Global packaging market is expected to reach USD 1,275-billion by 2027, registering a CAGR of 4%.
- Global flexible packaging market is expected to reach USD 164 billion by 2027, with a CAGR of 4.5%.
- As against this, the Indian packaging industry is expected to register a CAGR of 27% between 2022 and 2027, while the flexible packaging market in India is set to see a CAGR of about 11% between 2021–2025.

EVENTS

Syntegon debuts green packaging



Syntegon's solutions at Pack-Ex India

The German multinational showcased solutions for high-value and price-sensitive markets. Syntegon's portfolio targets the food and pharmaceutical sectors.

In the horizontal segment, they introduced a new bakery machine with an advanced loader and vibration system for better automation and speed. In snacks, they presented a snack bag maker.

For sandwich cookies, Syntegon developed an automated packaging line focused on speed, flexibility, and efficiency. The FGCT high-speed count feeder groups cookies and loads them into trays, minimising damage and waste while emphasising sustainability. The Pack 202 overwraps trays and handles various formats at different speeds. The MagTRAC collating unit, using linear motor technology, integrates with the BEC endload cartoner for high-speed operations and flexible handling, reducing downtime and resource use. The Elematic 1001 side load case fits into existing lines and addresses labour shortages and cost pressures.

Syntegon's strategy was to increase in automation. Their SVL 2310 Twin vertically bags potato chips while the Pack 301LS with Smart Duplex Measuring Loader (SDML) ensures horizontal flow wrapping of biscuits, sandwich-style biscuits, cookies and crackers. Additionally, the Pack 201HS horizontal flow wrapper, which now includes a paper-ON-form retrofit kit allowing manufacturers to process paper-based and plastic film on a single system.

UFlex's sustainable packaging at WFI



UFlex's sustainable flexible at World Food India

UFlex showcased its sustainable flexible packaging solutions at World Food India 2024, addressing plastic waste pollution through recycling multilayer plastics. The event, organized by the Ministry of Food Processing Industries and held from 19–22 September in New Delhi, highlighted India's growing role in the food processing sector.

At the event, UFlex presented enzyme-based biodegradable packaging and modified atmosphere technology to extend the shelf life of fresh produce, reducing food waste. Leadership participated in discussions on sustainable packaging for the FMCG sector, emphasizing UFlex's commitment to regulatory compliance and enhancing export potential.

Jeevaraj Gopal Pillai, UFlex's president of flexible packaging, discussed the company's innovations in packaging structures that include recycled content and reduce reliance on aluminum foil. He emphasized collaboration with stakeholders to promote a sustainable future.

Amit Shah, joint president of UFlex's flexible packaging business, highlighted the industry's role in the Indian economy and UFlex's focus on circularity. He noted their FDA-approved PET with 90% post-consumer recycled (PCR) content.

The event featured UFlex's eco-friendly packaging solutions, allowing attendees to explore its technologies. He emphasised that the flexible packaging industry is a key driver of the Indian economy.

Annu Yadav wins Print Olympiad



Cash prize of Rs 1,00,000 for Annu Yadav

Annu Yadav, a student from Guru Jambheshwar University of Science and Technology in Hisar, won the Print Olympiad 2024. She received a cash prize of Rs. 1,00,000 and a certificate recognizing her as the Top Print Student of India. The award was presented by Pratibha Goyal, vice chancellor of Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia Avadh University, and Sanjay Srivastava, vice chancellor of Mahatma Gandhi Central University.

The national finale took place at Dr Ram Manohar Lohia Avadh University during the International Conference on Sustainable Printing and Packaging. Print students from across India participated, and a panel of judges from Sri Lanka, Indonesia, and India evaluated the finalists.

The Print Olympiad is organised annually by the Offset Printers Association (OPA), Ludhiana, in collaboration with universities and printing institutions. Since its inception in 2014, the event aims to recognise emerging talent in printing technology across four regions: North, South, East, and West.

Dr TKS Lakshmi Priya, chief coordinator of Print Olympiad 2024, noted the rigorous selection process, which included preliminary online tests and regional finales at various universities. Yadav, who developed an interest in graphic design during her senior secondary classes, plans to focus on sustainable printing and aims for a career in research and development to promote eco-friendly printing technologies.