

THE PACKMAN

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BEVERAGE PACKAGING LIGHTENS UP AT INTERPACK 2026



Shivtek showcases innovation-led specialty chemicals portfolio



Stahl highlights India's potential in advanced and sustainable coatings



Nichrome eyes rising demand for ESL and aseptic milk packaging

UFlex heat-sealable polyester film boosts recyclable packaging

At Plastindia 2026, UFlex showcased the full strength of its diversified portfolio – films, resins, inks, adhesives, and machinery – under one roof. Speaking to *The Packman*, Ashish Saxena, joint president – Packaging Films Business, explained that the company's objective at the exhibition was to demonstrate how integrated innovation can help the industry move faster towards sustainability while remaining commercially viable.

At the center of UFlex Films Business' display at Plastindia 2026 was an industry-first development in heat-sealable polyester film – a solution designed to address one of the biggest challenges in flexible packaging: recyclability without compromising performance.

"Polyester is a fantastic substrate for printing, but it does not have sufficient sealing properties," Ashish Saxena, joint president – Packaging Films Business, UFlex, explained. "Traditionally, it has to be laminated with polyethylene. What we have done is create an industry-leading solution that makes polyester itself heat-sealable."

He added that while conventional structures offer seal strengths of around 1 to 1.5 kg, UFlex's new solution delivers up to 2 kg of seal strength. "This means many packages – especially for small items like biscuits and candies – can now be made without polyethylene. You get a mono-material pouch, which is far more sustainable because it is a pure polyester structure."

SUSTAINABILITY AS THE INDUSTRY'S BIGGEST OPPORTUNITY

According to Saxena, sustainability is no longer a choice – it is the defining opportunity and challenge for the flexible packaging industry. With India's Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) regulations now in



Ashish Saxena, joint president – Packaging Films Business, UFlex, at Plastindia 2026. Photo: The Packman

place, brands are required to collect, recycle, and reuse packaging waste.

"This is where we are offering a range of PCR films to help brands meet recycled content requirements," he said. "More importantly, we are continuously introducing solutions that make the packaging itself more recyclable. That is why this heat-sealable polyester film is a real game-changer."

THREE MARKET TRENDS SHAPING PACKAGING

Saxena outlined three key trends shaping the industry today. The first is reduction – simplifying packaging, using thinner films, and replacing complex, non-recyclable structures.

"We are contributing by producing thinner films with better barrier properties," he said. "This allows replacement of materials like aluminum foil or PVDC with more sustainable alternatives."

The second trend is the growing use of post-consumer recycled (PCR) content, now mandated by regulation. UFlex, he said, is working across polyester, polyethylene, and polypropylene.

"An important milestone was achieved when we received FDA approval for PE and PP solutions," he said. "This makes UFlex the only Indian company with food-grade solutions across all three major polymers – polyester, PP, and PE."

The third trend is brand protection and shelf appeal. "We are seeing increasing demand for attractive finishes like matte and metallized films so that products stand out on the shelf," he said.

ADAPTING TO REGULATIONS

On how the industry is responding to stricter norms, Saxena said large brands are already taking action. "Some major multinationals have changed their packaging structures to make PCR content feasible," he said. "For small and medium players, greater clarity on implementation from the government will further accelerate adoption."

ECONOMIC AND TECHNICAL CHALLENGES

Saxena acknowledged that the industry is currently facing overcapacity due to heavy investments made in anticipation of rapid growth. "Consumer markets have slowed, and this has created overcapacity across the entire supply chain," he said. He also pointed to pressure from Chinese overcapacity in the polyester chain, which has led to cheaper imports. "We hope the government remains proactive in preventing unfair dumping."

Beyond economics, the technical challenge remains: how to introduce sustainability without increasing costs in a price-sensitive market.

Flexibles

“In the West, a 50-gram potato chip bag may cost INR 50 rupees. In India, it costs around INR 10 rupees,” he said. “We deliver tremendous value to consumers, and the challenge is to maintain performance and cost while making packaging sustainable.”

Yet, he remains optimistic. “If there is one thing Indians are world leaders in, it is using small resources to achieve big benefits. By definition, we are very sustainable. I have no doubt the Indian packaging industry will lead the way.” ■

— Mahan Hazarika

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