With the fresh pear crop now being harvested, CMI has announced the national rollout of its new pouch bag for Sweet Gourmet Pears. Introduced on a test basis last year, the bag proved to be a hit with consumers, invigorating growth for pears, a category that has seen a slow but steady decline over several years.

“CMI saw an opportunity to reach convenience-oriented consumers with a new premium bag,” Steve Lutz, vice president of marketing for CMI, said in a press release. "For years the only packages available for retailers have been low-quality, discounted poly bags. We saw an opportunity to introduce a high-quality pouch bag to raise consumer expectations and increase transaction size for retailers. That’s exactly what we’ve done
with our new Sweet Gourmet Pears pouch.”

Lutz said the pear category is ripe for the new CMI pouch bag. Retail data shows that only 10 percent of pear sales occur in bags compared to nearly 50 percent in the apple category. “With the use of premium packaging trending upward in the produce department, our team was confident that the same consumer buying apples and other fruits in these bags would be equally interested in pears,” he said in the release. “That’s exactly what we experienced when we tested the bags last winter.”

According to Katharine Grove, marketing specialist for CMI, the test was conducted late last year when CMI worked with a large Eastern retailer to document consumer demand for the item but also to identify whether or not the new pouch bag lineup would cannibalize sales from existing bulk pears. According to Grove, CMI anticipated there would be some drop in bulk sales, but overall there would be growth in the category. “Results were astonishing,” she said. "Not only were existing bulk sales not affected, the Sweet Gourmet Pears test drove almost $900,000 in incremental dollars.”

Grove said part of the sales success seen with the Sweet Gourmet Pears program was a result of the educational and usage information included on the new bag: “Our design, inspired by the natural beauty of pears, accompanied with usage and education information, was a winner with consumers in test stores. Immediately after introduction in the test retailer, the Sweet Gourmet Pears pouch bag became the No. 2 selling item in the pear category. Our retail partner not only continued with the program but expanded it to include other pear varieties.”

This season, CMI is launching the Sweet Gourmet Pears three-pound pouch bag in Bartlett and D’Anjou varieties in select stores across the United States. These new pouch bags have been designed to complement the existing Sweet Gourmet Pears program that is currently available in two-pound packages of Bartlett, D’Anjou, Red and Bosc pear varieties.