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## **Experience in sustainable packaging reveals broad misunderstanding**

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A year down the road with its sustainable packaging line, Sev-Rend Corp. has enjoyed a great deal of success as retailers have demanded service to such consumer interest.



“Sustainable packaging is a continuing trend that is not going away,” said Jeff Watkin, director of marketing for the packaging design and manufacturing firm. “We have seen successes with our new recyclable products. In the course of a year with sustainable packaging, we’ve seen there is a lot of misinformation from all sides.”

Sev-Rend is providing information to customers “so they know what is acceptable and what is not.” Experience has revealed a misunderstanding at all distribution chain levels as to what “sustainable” means.

Tony O’Driscoll, Sev-Rend’s vice president of sales and marketing, said the demand for sustainable produce packaging “is developing at an unprecedented rate, as retailers respond to consumer requests. Consumers still will pay more, and they are still happy for the convenience of packaging, which they presume the industry will make available in a sustainable manner. We are trying to meet the ultimate need and deal with (external) misinformation and myths” regarding recycling, biodegradability and compostable products.

“There is a need to educate consumers and all levels in redistribution” of the nuances of sustainability.

O’Driscoll said that “green washing” — making a misleading claim about the environmental benefits of a product can be a crime, and retailers have been held liable. Retailer ignorance of the category is not a pass toward exemption.

He urges industry study of a key source toward accurate understanding of this topic, with [“Green](#)

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[Guides](#)” published by the Federal Trade Commission.

Green Guides is a summary of many technical layers of regulations on this category.

O’Driscoll also commends [How2 Recycle](#). Their approach clarifies exactly how consumers can best handle the various categories of recyclable packaging.

To that end, O’Driscoll indicates that mis-understanding extends to reporters — and other consumers — who feel good about throwing anything with the famous recycle triangle into their blue bin.

The numbers alongside those triangles are critically important. A chemist by education and professional background, O’Driscoll said that improper recycling of plastic grocery bags and products labeled with “seven” can be very damaging to the recycling process. A mixture of the wrong type of plastic into a recycling method has on many occasions forced the destruction of entire batches of materials targeted for reuse.

A year ago, *The Produce News* reported Sev-Rend’s introduction of tags, netting, film and pouch bags that are 100 percent recyclable. These polyolefin items were rolled-out last fall. “All of these are 100 percent recyclable. “We are trying to spearhead the demands of the industry,” O’Driscoll indicated.

Sev-Rend, which is based in Collinsville, IL, has internalized its environmental conservation efforts to apply to its own modern manufacturing plant.

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