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## **Sev-Rend focuses on sustainable packaging options for a demanding supply chain**

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The commitment to sustainability along with keeping the supply chain moving have been the main focus for Sev-Rend High-Performance Packaging for the past several years.

Jeff Watkin, the St. Louis-based company's director of marketing, recently spoke with *The Produce News* on the increase in demand for packaging along with sustainable options.

"Our sustainable packaging line has several options that meet the need for the ever-changing market," Watkin noted. "We have recyclable options for all of our packaging types, from pouches to film/net combos, to tag options. All items have been qualified to work on all types of fresh produce

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packaging equipment.” Even though Sev-Rend currently produces recyclable options in all styles of packaging, the demand in “compostable is now available with our Wineglass Tags,” he added.

With the sustainable packaging demand as the next step in fresh produce packaging industry, Sev-Rend is taking its manufacturing process one step further, with Mother Nature in mind.

Sev-Rend’s modern facility utilizes up-to-date technology for its manufacturing processes. “The use of water-based inks in our printing process is something we always like to champion with our prospects and clients,” said Watkin.

This ink system is more environmentally-friendly when compared to other “solvent-based” printing systems.

“With several of our equipment lines we try to reuse items, such as trim waste on extrusion, which results in very little plastic waste going into the landfills,” he added. “All equipment lines are managed with post-industrial waste in mind and all of the trim is put into regrind. Furthermore, with energy conservation in mind, we use motion detection lighting systems through the facility.”

The COVID-19 pandemic has not put a hold on the sustainable initiatives for the Sev-Rend team. When things came into full swing earlier this year — the company saw the demand for retail packaging heavily increase.

“With the foodservice industry seeing a severe drop in demand, many grower-packers shifted their focus to the retail side of the industry,” said Watkin. “We saw quantities increase for a majority of our clients which can cause stress on the supply chain for raw materials. We have daily updates from our purchasing team. I give them a lot of credit — they kept things moving in a timely manner where we saw our competitors dropping the ball. The internal communication allowed for good management of lead times for our clients and resulted in new opportunities.”

With the pandemic slowing everything down items have adapted, such as the ever-popular PMA Fresh Summit coming up in mid-October moving to a virtual format.

“I like to think of this as the family reunion got moved to a ZOOM meeting,” Watkin said of the new virtual format for the PMA Fresh Summit this year.

For Sev-Rend, this will be the first virtual show that it is exhibiting in.

“We have participated on the other end of the spectrum in other industry shows as attendees, such as at United Fresh. This is literally flipping our strategy on its head for a virtual environment and I am a firm believer of you only get out as much as you put in with these types of situations,” Watkin said. “With that being said we are still using Fresh Summit as a springboard for launching a new sustainable option that we see as a major game changer.”

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