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**Sev-Rend is making a difference with bio-able solutions packaging**

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By

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As a leader in produce packaging, Sev-Rend High-Performance Packaging is dedicated to fulfilling the needs and demands of today's modern consumer through innovation and ingenuity.

These days, that requires focusing on, among other things, sustainability, and the company made big news in that area earlier this year with the introduction of its Bio-Able Solutions line.

"We've been marketing it very heavily, and it is a true product line that is classic-based packaging — it's very similar to a traditional pouch or traditional film, but it rapidly degrades over a short period of time," said Jeff Watkin, director of marketing for Sev-Rend, headquartered in Collinsville, IL.

Bio-Able Solutions packaging provides the protection of plastic while giving customers confidence that when they purchase produce, they are also doing something good for the planet, because the packaging breaks down in landfills much quicker than normal plastic products.

"This is an engineered product, so we have a timeline in place where after 18 months of those packages being produced, it will start to break down naturally," Watkin said. "And within a 24-month cycle, this package breaks down to basically, CO<sub>2</sub>, water, and biomass, leaving no micro-plastics behind. This can be achieved not only in a terrestrial environment, like a landfill, but also in a marine environment."

Another exciting factor of this groundbreaking packaging is the fact that it is also recyclable.

"The consumer has options — they have a recyclable product, so if there's a recycling infrastructure in place where they live, they can do that with peace of mind," Watkin said. "If they don't and it makes it into a landfill, it will break down in a rapid period of time. Either way we are looking out for Mother Earth."

Sev-Rend has been leading the way as a packaging manufacturer for more than 27 years, with produce as its primary area of business. It started out as a tag and label company that did a lot of work with potatoes and onions. As it grew, it started adding netting, film, and pouches, which it added to its portfolio starting in 2012.

Sev-Rend is also very active in the avocado, citrus and apple categories, and it has recently entered the frozen produce space. These new products are made possible through the company's innovative development team, which applies its ingenuity and vision in creating new package types.

"These people are the wizards of the packaging game as it pertains to fresh produce," Watkin said, noting that he's seen a lot of examples where a new product demands an innovative package. "Our

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team snaps into action and loves taking those projects on.”

Of course, the story of 2020 was COVID-19, which led to an increased demand for packaged produce.

“When COVID-19 first hit, we saw a lot of people demanding the two-, three-pound bags because the shopping pattern for the consumer drastically changed,” Watkin said. “You had the consumer all of sudden thinking: 1) I’m not going to the store as much, so I’m spending more when I walk into that store; and 2) There’s that perceived notion of that piece of fruit being handled by twenty people. I feel safer grabbing a protected environment bag with multiple pieces of fruit in it.”

He added that Sev-Rend’s success comes to down to a lot of factors, including responsiveness. And that requires the ability to perform even in less-than-ideal situations. Sev-Rend realizes how important a situation can be when there is a problem and you need a solution. They want to be known as the company that is easy to deal with, especially during difficult moments.

“We care about our partners and only want them to succeed, that’s the main reason we service our accounts like crazy,” Watkin said. “And then there’s speed to market — we are a fast-turnaround shop. I actually had a retailer I was talking to the other day who mentioned, ‘We know you guys are fast, that’s why we like working with you.’”

“Right now, with supply chain issues, that’s a tricky one, and we’ve still been able to maintain consistency,” he continued. “Although sometimes longer than we want, our lead times are some of the fastest in the industry and we’re very attuned to attention to detail. We pay attention to our customers and their needs and wants, and we try to move as fast as we can for them and their ultimate success.”

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