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**Sev-Rend stays nimble in a changing packaging marketplace**

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By

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Officials at Sev-Rend are well aware of the importance of packaging to the produce industry and they are just as focused on the fact that they need to be nimble operators to be successful with the category.

The Collinsville, Ill.-based company, founded in 1993, has aggressively expanded its packaging portfolio over the last dozen years to include film, pouches and soft-tubular netting—called Sof-Net—to offer its customers as many options as possible.

In this day and age, those options are vital to the success of any packaging supplier and just about everyone else involved in the produce food chain, from brands to packers to retailers.

“When you break it down in simple terms: packaging is imperative to the fresh produce market by getting the commodity from the field to the retail environment,” says Jeff Watkin, Sev-Rend’s director of marketing and a company employee for more than 11 years. “Packaging has become a very complex issue over the past several years with sustainability taking center stage along with the focus of end-of-life for the product.

“It is critical to transportation and product preservation so that we minimize food waste as much as possible. We now see consumer packs being extremely popular in the retail environment where the consumer is looking for product in 2-pound, 3-pound, 5-pound and even more sizes. We saw this trend explode during COVID and it has not settled down since then.”

Watkin said that Sev-Rend is unique in the industry as the company manufactures everything its sells into the market with the exception of some smaller items like clipping wire. “The main thing that we always like to communicate is that we are not an equipment manufacturer and, therefore, not married to a couple of packaging types we put into the market,” he said. “This gives us the nimble ability to service many packaging types for brand owners and packers, in turn, giving the ease of consistency across multiple packaging types where most packaging companies do not have that luxury.”

He further explains that this process gives brand owners peace of mind if Sev-Rend is doing film products and tag products for the same program under the same roof. “Our production team will always look to ensure there is consistency between packaging vehicles for the same brand,” he adds. “We also take much pride in our packaging being drop-in-ready on all major industry equipment.”

As with many packaging companies, Sev-Rend has paid a lot of attention to sustainability issues for years. Watkin says the company always look to assist and consult with its clients to put them in the right direction or packaging type to hit their sustainability goals, many of which are retailer driven. “We have introduced several options to the market with great success, such as our Bio-Able

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Solutions line of products,” he said. “This product type is a plastic that breaks down in a rapid period of time when compared to normal plastic types, leaving behind no micro-plastics. We also offer recyclable options for a majority of packaging types which hits many retailer-driven initiatives that are rapidly coming up in 2025 and beyond.”

He notes that another item Sev-Rend will be launching is a film product that utilizes Post-Consumer Recycled (PCR) for the popular film/net style packaging. “This is another item we see larger retailers asking the packers for,” Watkins explains. “We are also aggressively grown over the past year and brought on Mark Hoppenjans, our new vice president of sales and sustainability. Before coming to Sev-Rend, Mark had worked as a GRI-certified sustainability consultant for large organizations and has spent a majority of his career on the packaging industry on the corrugated-paper side.

Sev-Rend has no intention of resting on its laurels. The future looks bright but it is going to take a lot of effort to stay ahead of the curve. “We are always looking to the future for growth with new capital investments on equipment that allows us to bring even more products to the market,” Watkin said.

“Expansion is always on the horizon when the timing is right, but with our current growth pattern we will be seeing that move sooner rather than later.

“The main items we will be laser focused on is sustainability, whether it is with new products coming online for the market to utilize or in our production processes where we have committed to utilizing water-based inks and other environmentally friendly manufacturing processes.”

Plus, he says, he wants to hear from retailers, brand owners and packers to discuss the market and see how Sev-Rend can help.

“Having a company such as Sev-Rend that is extremely focused on service and quality, along with sustainability, is a massive competitive advantage,” Watkins said.

“We also have many value-added areas such as an in-house art department that allows us to move quickly for our clients and alleviate some of the headache in the process such as art updates or creation. This gives us the speed-to-market advantage that is critical in the fresh produce industry.”

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