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# Gary Tee, Vice President of Global Converting, Tipa Compostable Packaging | Notable Leaders in Sustainability 2024



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Tee

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Gary Tee believes the future of flexible packaging is moving companies to more environmentally sustainable materials.

For Tee, vice president of global converting at Tipa Compostable Packaging, that means shepherding companies toward compostable materials and away from conventional flexible plastic packaging.

It's a change from earlier in his career, in the 1990s, when he worked in quality control for a

packaging company and saw the bakery industry's move from cellulose wraps into what was then the hot new thing: plastic films.

"The main challenge at the time was, ironically, the transition from cellulose wraps for baked goods to OPP [oriented polypropylene], a new material at that time," said Tee. "My role now is to usher in the switch from OPP to new bio-based and compostable alternatives."

Hod Hasharon, Israel-based Tipa makes packaging films and laminates that it says meet composting standards from the Biodegradable Products Institute, TÜV Austria and other certification bodies, complying with EN 13432, ASTM D6400 and AS 4736/AS 5810.

Tee sees diversifying packaging as a key "future-proofing" strategy for businesses, allowing them to meet consumer expectations for a lower environmental impact and more readily comply with changing government policies.

"Businesses that want to thrive amidst changing legal environments and fluctuating consumer demands need to take a proactive approach to future-proof their business practices," he said. "Packaging is a good place to start, by integrating a broad spectrum of solutions now – from reusable and recyclable packaging to compostable options."

In particular, he said the United Kingdom, where he is based, and other countries are starting to realize the limits of a recycle-only approach.

"We are facing a unique dilemma, shared by many nations worldwide, in which recycling is championed as the ultimate solution to the plastic waste crisis," Tee said. "Recent research, however, has revealed that recycling flexible packaging is ineffective. In the long run, recycling alone won't be enough."

Not that it's an easy switch to new materials.

Tee said customers need to be "constantly reassured" that the performance of new materials matches conventional plastic and that Tipa can provide plug-and-play solutions on existing equipment.

Tee admits that he gets a charge out of seeing packaging he's worked on sitting on supermarket shelves and said he's been particularly interested throughout his career in how science and technology can innovate packaging.

He said he worked on some of the first compostable packaging offerings for coleslaw and for post-consumer content for plastic lidding film.

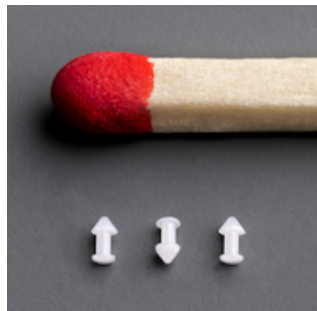
And Tee said he sees positive developments.

Recent technological developments like infrared sorting and scanning equipment, for example, can more easily separate compostable vs. recyclable packaging in the waste and recycling stream.

And artificial intelligence shows promise for its ability to speed up research and development of compostable polymers, he said.

The push to grow markets for compostables requires broad coalition building as well.

"In my work, I focus on raising awareness and driving the adoption of compostable packaging among manufacturers across the globe," he said. "We've partnered with a variety of stakeholders, including policymakers, advocacy groups and businesses, to push for the necessary infrastructure and legislative changes that will support the widespread use of compostable materials."



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