

USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

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Plastic Packaging a Concern for Fruit Buyers

Report Categories:

Fresh Fruit

Fresh Deciduous Fruit

Vegetables

Exporter Guide

SP1 - Expand International Marketing Opportunities

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Report Highlights:

Consumer demand for less plastic packaging was a key issue at the recent German Fruit and Vegetable Congress DOGK in Duesseldorf

General Information:

About 550 participants convened in Duesseldorf for the German Fruit and Vegetable Congress (Deutscher Obstund Gemuese Kongress, DOGK) in Duesseldorf on September 20/21, 2018. Topics discussed included packaging, e-commerce in the fruit and vegetable trade, growing demand for soft fruits and the impact of climate change on German domestic production. This report focusses on consumer preferences for packaging.

Helmut Huebsch with GfK Consumer-Panel and Services reported that German consumers increasingly view packaging a decisive element of their purchasing decision. In a recent consumer scan, 62 percent of the respondents preferred non-packaged fruits and vegetables to pre-packaged produce. In addition, from 2013 to 2017 the percentage of consumers who would be willing to pay more for environmentally friendly packaging rose to 38.5 percent from 31.1 percent.

Michael Wilde, Sustainability and Communication Manager at Eosta¹ explained that EU consumer demand for less packaging conflicts with the need / wish to present information and branding. He presented a number of packaging options that reduce the use of mineral oil based plastic at an increasing degree:

- Bioplastic – plastic made from plant oils rather than mineral oil
- Cardboard with plastic elements
- Cardboard
- Sugar cane based cardboard
(Cardboard made from sugar cane waste cellulose that does not require trees to be cut down for carton production)
- Self-adhesive stickers
- Laser branding
(A high-resolution laser eliminates color pigments on the outer skin of the product. The affected areas appear like printed without the need for ink)
- No packaging at all, information is provided on outside box or sign

EOSTA is moving away from plastic packaging and gradually implements laser branding instead. This is partly to be attractive for consumers but equally important to save on hidden costs for packaging and packaging disposal.

Dr. Thomas Maier-Eschenlohr with Landpack demonstrated a variety of transport packaging based on renewable resources such as straw, hemp, and jute textile. These were especially designed for e-commerce because many consumers who buy food online tend to be sensitive to environment issues and do not want to contribute to plastic waste.

¹ Eosta is a Netherlands based fruit trade company that focuses on organic and fair trade produce

Comment: Packaging was also a well-discussed topic in the networking breaks with the common conclusion that the reduction of plastic packaging is one of the transpiring hot topics in fruit and vegetable trade in the future. This creates opportunities for U.S. exporters that use innovative and sustainable packaging and labeling solutions.

Background: DOGK is an annual event jointly organized by

- Fruchthandel Magazin, a the weekly publication on fruit and vegetable trade
www.fruchthandel.de
- GS1 Germany, a standard/barcode issuing company www.gs1.org/about/what-we-do
- AMI, a Germany based market and price reporting company
www.ami-informiert.de/ami-maerkte.html

Next year the DOGK will be on September 16/17, 2019. For more information, please see:
www.dogkongress.de