

Expo ticks all the boxes... just like the product

GRIMSBY seafood packaging firm Tri-Pack went to the 2009 Expo in high spirits, and once again it did not disappoint.

Having secured a contract to supply an initial three containers of the revolutionary Cool Seal box to a Florida fish processor prior to the Brussels event, the South Humber-side Industrial Estate operators were in a buoyant mood.

The end-of-April show is the key date in the diary of managing director Stephen Clarke, who explained why.

He said: "It is the cornerstone exhibition in the industry and we go every year, we wouldn't miss it.

"We look for export opportunities and we find it a very good meeting place for our customers, who tend to be located in very inaccessible places a long distance away.

"We have our agents from all over Europe there and they bring customers to our stand. It is an absolutely vital exhibition for us and every year has been part of our ongoing increasing success in the seafood business."

Environmental factors and food hygiene legislation have been key drivers behind the branded polypropylene packaging, which is flatpacked pre-use, saving huge areas of expensive factory space. Leakproof, it

"An absolutely vital exhibition for us and every year has been part of our ongoing increasing success"

Mr Clarke, who began working on his innovation in the early Nineties, said:

"Environmental issues are more and more important, and this is sponsored particularly by the French supermarkets. They are making very aggressive demands on suppliers, and we tick these boxes which is very good for us.

"We are going well, we are gaining new customers and not losing old ones. We are getting more and more advanced in our quality design offering and getting more focused on individual markets. What we sell in Norway is different to what we sell in France and the UK. We know we have got an all-encompassing offering."

Of the performance at the show, Mr Clarke said: "Numbers were definitely down in terms of footfall but the quality of the people there was up. We were very pleased to see extremely senior people in major organisations, so we are very satisfied we went."

And on returning to Grimsby the positivity continued. The Cool Seal brand has just been accredited by the Canadian Department of Health for direct packaging of fresh food, opening up a new market.



BOXING CLEVER: Mr Clarke (left) demonstrates the Cool Seal box to Michael O'Sullivan of Dalys Seafoods Ltd, Ireland, in Brussels.

provides a double-layer of insulation to keep temperatures down and it also has a higher recyclable value than alternatives such as polystyrene. Once used it can be stacked or baled for collection or disposal.



KNOWLEDGE SHARING: Grimsby Institute representatives (from left) Mrs George, Dr Khan and Mr Davies.

Seafood studies to aid industry

RESearchers from Grimsby were presenting their initial findings from two very separate seafood studies to interested parties at the European Seafood Exposition.

Health implications and undeclared landings are being examined by two academics at Grimsby Institute of Further and Higher Education, who joined the Europe's Food Town stand.

And for qualified medical doctor Rebecca Khan, unravelling the truth from the myths surrounding the benefits of eating seafood is a challenge she is relishing.

Having completed a degree in health management, Dr Khan, the daughter of principal and chief executive Prof Daniel Khan, has embarked on a study that will get the wholehearted endorsement of the industry she is serving.

Delighted to have the opportunity to have her work published, she is completing a paper entitled Fresh Thinking on Seafood Nutrition and Seafood Health, that could become an authority on the subject, frequently updated in years to come.

She said: "A lot of what we hear is about Omega 3, but there are lots of other benefits out there as well. There are many minerals and vitamins in fish and there is a lot of cutting edge research being done about what all the different species have to offer.

"Increases in diets can lead to healthier hearts, improving cognitive thinking, joints and even improve skin conditions. Certain qualities can also prevent arthritis."

While many of the messages are positive, Dr Khan said it was also important to disseminate the facts from the old wives' tales. This includes righting a theory that prawns are bad for all consumers because of suggested high cholesterol levels, whereas many diets are unaffected, and clarifying messages such as fish consumption restrictions for pregnant women. Dietary impacts also vary depending on the age group.

Her research, being completed before taking up a position at Pinderfields Hospital in Wakefield to start her professional medical career, has also involved a series of interviews with leading figures in the industry and academia.

Dr Khan said: "What I am producing will give the key messages in quite a simplified form. There are a lot of conflicting messages out there, and they all reach the public in different ways, I am trying to sort through it and come up with a risk/benefit analysis. The key message is, and one a lot of people are sending out, is the UK needs to eat more fish and more seafood.

"I am leaving a structure in place so Masters students of the future and new researchers can pick up the work I leave. It is a continuous thing and we can run with it for a long time – I am just starting things up."

Tracy George, key account manager in enterprise and research at Humber Seafood Institute, welcomed the work. She said: "It really is time we got on with pushing the benefits of seafood. It is definitely a key part of the sustainability of the sector and is an important way to promote fish."

Will Davies, a graduate in marine conservation from Edinburgh's Herriot-Watt University, is currently working as a fish technologist with Grimsby Institute at Humber Seafood Institute.

He said: "I joined Grimsby Institute straight from university to undertake the project in conservancy and seafood 'green' issues. I am looking into illegal, unregulated, unreported fishing, which is what Greenpeace has been shouting about for ages under the term pirate fishing, where a boat perhaps lands 10 tonnes but only claims it is five.

"There is a lot of work being done globally around cod and tuna, and I am putting the building blocks together for lesser value species that are going to be important in the future. I am working in collaboration with Seafish, the industry authority, which has a responsibility programme in the UK and wants to expand it further.

"Grimsby Institute is laying the foundations for larger projects, working with Government associations, helping them to put measures in place to help them to achieve better premiums and better market access."

Humber Seafood Institute is also now on the European seafood map, according to Mrs George. She said: "It is growing a reputation as a proactive centre and we are confident it will become an international hub for seafood work."