

CARDBOARD PACKAGING

Billerud launches Fresh Services

Through a partnership with Everfresh, Billerud is looking to offer a specialist service concept that looks to reduce waste in the fresh produce supply chain

CARL COLLEN

✉ carl@fruitnet.com

Corrugated cardboard packaging paper expert Billerud is teaming up with Everfresh, one of Sweden's leading fruit and vegetable importers and part of Total Produce, with the group being the first to use the new Billerud Fresh Services concept. This is a new venture aimed at cutting the amount of fruit damaged and lost at all stages of the supply chain due to poor or unsuitable packaging – approximately €10bn worth in Europe every year, or 10 per cent of all transported produce.

"We spoke to wholesalers and retailers to get their verdict, and found that there were huge losses because the packaging simply didn't offer enough protection," Billerud's Caroline Nilsson tells Eurofruit Magazine. "There were high demands being placed on the packaging, which was simply not of good enough quality."

The Billerud Fresh Services project involves the group taking on responsibility for the protection of the fruit from the grower to the retailer, covering everything from the selection of box material, design and construction to measuring the temperature and humidity of the boxes during transportation. This way, the group can analyse and recommend the best box construction and design for any product.

The fruit is monitored from the orchard to its final destination and is then assessed in order to find out exactly where problems arise and the potential costs of such issues, before the packaging is analysed and it is agreed on how to maximise its efficiency to reduce waste and eliminate the problems that have arisen.

Billerud's Tobias Bergarp feels that the project has environmental as well as financial benefits for all concerned. "We wanted to demonstrate the importance of proper packaging. If you make sure you're all pulling in the right direction throughout the supply chain, you can reduce your waste, which translates into better profits and less environmental impact."

"Sadly, there is a trend in Europe of minimising packaging – this is unfortunate for many reasons, one of them being that proper packaging is highly beneficial to the environment," he adds.

The new cooperation will see Billerud

ensure that research performed at its Box Laboratory, where regular tests and quality control will take place, will be readily available to customers using Billerud Fresh Services. The high number of waste problems that occur when transporting citrus from Spain to Sweden apparently made Everfresh an ideal customer for the initial Fresh Services partnership.

"We are innovators, that means continuously asking questions about how we can operate faster, simpler and more cheaply," says Jörgen Steen, purchasing manager at Everfresh Group. "Working with Billerud is a natural step in our constant hunt for greater efficiency and a lower environmental impact. We have great hopes that we can reduce our handling costs and at

strategy. Extending and developing our business offer does not mean that we will take over the production of corrugated boxes – the production of boxes will take place in close cooperation with our customers."

The packaging itself is key to the system, with the Billerud flute material amongst the strongest of its type in the world. "In this sector you have to go for virgin fibre material, and we use 100 per cent of this to make up our packaging. Even so, we have managed to cut the amount of material used by 15 per cent, without compromising the strength of the packaging," says Ms Nilsson.

The Billerud Fresh Services project cannot be a short-term one if it is to make a real difference, according to Ms Nilsson. "This



The concept is designed to protect the fruit at every stage of the supply chain, from grower to consumer

the same time increase the amount of fruit that reaches the consumer. This is an agreement where everyone wins – including the environment."

Lennart Eberleh, business area manager for packaging boards, feels that the challenge of offering such a service is one that Billerud will rise to: "Cooperation with Everfresh is the result of many years of hard work. Taking the step of selling a service concept and not just paper is a stimulating and exciting development in line with our

cannot just be a one-time thing, it has to be more long term than that. It consists of a long-term cooperation, where analysis and follow-ups are continuous." And the results so far have been positive, as Ms Nilsson confirms. "The early feedback has been very good," she says.

In short, Billerud intends to prove the importance of focusing not only on production, but also on the market and on maintaining close relationships with customers to fully meet their needs.