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# COFFEE TALK



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## “Kick the Can” – Coffee Packaging Innovations

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## **Flexible Packaging for Coffee: The Eco-Friendly Option** **By Felipe E. Sixto Director of Sales & Marketing; Sixto Packaging**

The evolution of packaging has significantly affected the way many products are processed, packaged, transported, and ultimately sold on store shelves. One area within the broader retail food/beverage sector that has benefited from the extensive packaging options available is the coffee market. Advances in high barrier materials have allowed many coffee roasters to extend the shelf life of their products, use high graphic eye catching designs, reduce their carbon foot print, all the while saving considerable money.

Flexible packaging, often criticized, decried, and outright attacked, is in fact a victim of disinformation. Flexible packaging in fact offers significant value and sustainability benefits to product manufacturers, retailers, and consumers that are often overlooked. The majority of the benefits actually come from the reduced environmental impact of using less material and resources to produce.

According to "A Study of Packaging Efficiency as it Relates to Waste Prevention" by Franklin Associates, producing a typical 12oz flexible packaging coffee pack produces 69% less greenhouse gas emissions than an 11.5oz steel coffee can. Furthermore, the study demonstrates that the production of the flexible packaging delivers a 50% reduction in BTU consumption and a 71% reduction in overall solid waste. Moreover, the February 2007, "Coffee Conundrum" case study by The ULS Report, found that a typical flexible packaging coffee brick pack reduces the weight of waste to landfill by 72% vs. metal cans even taking the recycling rates of cans into account.

In a Packaging & Technology Integrated Solutions, LLC study, cradle-to-grave life cycle consumption and CO2 emissions data was compared between an 11.5 oz (product weight) metal can with a plastic lid, plastic container with a lid, and a flexible packaging bag. Whereas the metal and plastic containers energy consumption MJ/11.5oz ratio is 4.21 and 5.18 respectfully, the flexible packaging bag's ratio is 1.14. Furthermore, emissions KG CO2 e/11.5oz was estimated at 0.33, 0.17, and 0.04 respectively.

The energy savings equivalent of changing all steel coffee cans to flexible packaging is more than 17,200,000 gallons of gasoline per year. That is without taking into account the fact that flexible packaging is lightweight and uses 20% less space in shipping further reducing transportation emissions. Flexible packaging is also resource efficient, having a product weight to packaging ration of nearly 29:1 compared to 3:1 to metal cans with a plastic lid and 5:1 for a plastic container with a lid.

Even though the environmental benefits of flexible packaging is evident over the use of rigid containers in many food and beverage sectors, the flexible packaging industry is investing heavily in research and development of bio-plastics which are either biodegradable or composed of biological materials or both. Furthermore, the American Chemistry Council recently created a new Flexible Film Recycling Group, whose focus will be to try to improve the recycling rate of plastic films, particularly, high barrier laminates like those used in coffee packaging. Upcycling partnerships with companies like TerraCycle often result in significant reduction of flexible packaging waste ending up in the landfill.

When a coffee roaster takes into account the environmental benefits listed above, the significant cost differential between flexible packaging and rigid containers, and the diverse packaging options for packaging coffee including roll stock for automated machines, zippered stand up pouches, gusseted premade bags with and without degassing valves; Flexible packaging should be the clear choice.

*Sixto Packaging is a family owned and operated flexible packaging convertor. They specialize in high barrier packaging for the snack food, coffee, and pet food industries.*



**SIXTO**  
PACKAGING

Sixto Packaging is a family-owned and operated flexible packaging converter, dedicated to providing the highest level of products, customer service and superior reliability for over 40 years.

Sixto's capabilities include up to 8 color flexographic printing; solventless laminations of films, paper, and foil; shrink sleeves for bottles; packaging structure R&D and marketing services.

### Sixto Packaging's coffee packaging products include:

- High barrier films available in 2, 3, or 4 ply structures.
- Metalized and foil or non metal/foil substrates.
- Fractional, Single Serve, Pods, Brick Pack, Roll Stock or Premade Bags

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