

Packaging of Fishery Byproducts

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Introduction

Packaging is crucial to our modern food distribution and marketing systems. Without protective packaging, food spoilage and wastage would increase tremendously. The advent of modern packaging technologies and new methods of packaging materials made possible the era of convenience products. In the past packaging emphasized the expectations of the producers and distributors but now it has shifted towards the consumer since they are becoming more demanding and aware of different choices to choose from. A food package usually provides a number of functions in addition to protection.

Fish is one of the most perishable of all foods. The best package material cannot improve the quality of the contents and so the fish must be of high quality prior to processing and packaging. Different products have different packaging requirements and it is important to choose suitable packaging material accordingly. The intended storage conditions of the product, i.e., temperature, relative humidity and expected shelf life have to be known. Multilayered plastics are very popular since properties of different films can be effectively used to pack different products. The basic function of food packaging is to protect the product from physical damage and contaminants, to delay microbial spoilage, to allow greater handling and to improve presentation.

Types of Packaging Material

Glass

Glass containers have been used for many centuries and still one of the important food packaging material. Glass has its unique place in food packaging since it is strong, rigid and chemically inert. It does not appreciably deteriorate with age and offers excellent barrier to solids, liquids and gases. It also gives excellent protection against odour and flavor and product visibility. Glass can also be moulded to variety of shapes and sizes. But it has disadvantages like fragility, photo oxidation and heavier in weight.

Cans

Most frequently used container for packing food for canning is tin plate can. Tin plate containers made their appearance in 1810. The tin can is made of about 98% steel and 2% tin coating on either side. The base steel used for making cans is referred as CMQ or can making quality steel. Corrosion behavior, strength and durability of the tin plate depend upon the chemical composition of the steel base. The active elements are principally copper and phosphorous. The more of these elements present the greater the corrosiveness of steel. Cans are traditionally used for heat sterilized products and different types are standard tin plates, tin free steel and vacuum deposited aluminium on steel and aluminium cans. For food products packing they are coated inside to get

desirable properties like acid resistance and sulphur resistance. But care has to be taken to avoid tainting of the lacquer.

Polymer coated two-piece cans of 6 oz capacity (307 x 109) with a universal polymer coating can be widely used for a variety of products. The can is made of Electrochemically chromium coated steel (ECCS) plate with clear polyethylene terephthalate (PET) coating on either side. The finished plate has a thickness of 0.19mm (0.15 mm of base steel + 20 μ PET coating on either side). The cans are made out of the steel plate by draw and redraw (DRD) process. The chromium coating along with the PET coating provides the can with a smooth, greyish, glistening appearance in addition to act as a barrier between the product and the base steel. The bottom of the can is designed for better stackability so that it can be stacked vertically without risk of toppling on the shelf. This also helps to reduce the storage space requirement for the cans. These cans are found to be suitable for thermal processing of fish and fish products. These cans are having easy open ends. Metal cans are advantageous as packages because of superior strength, high speed manufacturing and easy filling and dosing. Disadvantages of metal cans are weight, difficulty in reclosing and disposal.

Paper

A very considerable portion of packaged foods is stored and distributed in packages made out of paper or paper based materials. Because of its low cost, easy availability and versatility, paper is likely to retain its predominant position in packaging industries. Paper is highly permeable to gases, vapour and moisture and loses its strength when wet. Ordinary paper is not grease and oil resistant, but can be made resistant by mechanical processes during manufacturing.

Paper board

Thicker paper is called as paper board. There is not a clear cut dividing line between the heaviest grade of paper and the lightest board. Moreover, the lightest standard board is 0.19 mm thick and heavy papers are of 0.125 mm thickness. Paper boards are used for making corrugated fibre board cartons.

Polymer Packaging

Plastics offer several advantages over other packaging materials since they are light in weight, flexible and offers resistant to cracking. Plastics have the advantage that most of them possess excellent physical properties such as strength and toughness. The requirements with a particular food may not be met with in a single packaging material, as it may not possess all the desired properties. In such cases copolymers or laminates consisting of two or more layers of different polymers having different properties can also be used.

Low Density Polyethylene (LDPE)

Most commonly used as it possesses qualities such as transparency, water vapour impermeability, heat sealability, chemical inertness and low cost of production. Organic vapours, oxygen and carbon dioxide permeabilities are high and has poor grease barrier property. Resists temperature between - 40°C to 85°C. Polyethylene (polythene, PE) is the material consumed in the largest quantity by the packaging industry.

High Density Polyethylene (HDPE)

HDPE resins are produced by low-pressure process. HDPE possesses a much more linear structure than LDPE and has up to 90% crystallinity, compared with LDPE which exhibits crystallinities as low as 50%. It is stronger, thicker, less flexible and more brittle than LDPE and has lower permeability to gases and moisture. It has a higher softening temperature (121°C) and can therefore be heat sterilized. High molecular weight high density polythene (HM-HDPE) has very good mechanical strength, less creep and better environmental stress crack resistance property.

Linear Low Density Polythene (LLDPE)

Linear low density polythene is low density polythene produced by a low pressure process. Normal low density polythene has many $-C_5H_{11}$ side chains. These are absent in LLDPE, allowing the molecules to pack closer together to give a very tough resin. It is virtually free of long chain branches but does contain numerous short side chains. Generally, the advantages of LLDPE over LDPE are improved chemical resistance, improved performance at both low and high temperatures, higher surface gloss, higher strength at a given density and a greater resistance to environmental stress cracking. LLDPE shows improved puncture resistance and tear strength. The superior properties of LLDPE have led to its use in new applications for polyethylene as well as the replacement of LDPE and HDPE in some areas.

Polypropylene (PP)

Polypropylene is produced by the polymerisation of propylene. All PP films have permeability about $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ that of polyethylene. It is stronger, rigid and lighter than polyethylene.

Cast polypropylene (CPP)

It is an extruded, non oriented film and is characterized by good stiffness, grease and heat resistance and also has good moisture barrier. However, it is not a good gas barrier.

Oriented, Heat set Polypropylene (OPP):

Orientation can be in one direction (unbalanced) or in two directions equally (balanced). The resulting film is characterized by good low temperature durability, high stiffness and excellent moisture vapour transmission rate. One drawback of OPP is its low tensile strength.

Polystyrene

The material is manufactured from ethylene and benzene, which are cheap. The polymer is normally atactic and it is thus completely amorphous because of the bulky nature of the benzene rings prevents a close approach of the chains. The material offers reasonably good barrier to gases but is a poor barrier to water vapour. New applications of polystyrene involve coextrusion with barrier resins such as EVOH and poly vinylidene chloride copolymer to produce thermoformed, wide mouthed containers for shelf stable food products and multi layer blow moulded bottles. To overcome the brittleness of polystyrene, synthetic rubbers can be incorporated at levels generally not exceeding 14% w/w. High impact polystyrene is an excellent material for thermoforming. Co-polymerisation with other polymers like acrylonitrile butadiene improves the flexibility. Since it is crystal clear and sparkling, it is used in blister packs

and as a breathing film for packaging fresh produce. These materials have low heat sealability and often tend to stick to the jaws of heat sealer.

Polyester

Polyester can be produced by reacting ethylene glycol with terephthalic acid. Polyester film's outstanding properties as a food packaging material are its great tensile strength, low gas permeability, excellent chemical resistance, lightweight, elasticity and stability over a wide range of temperature (-60° to 220°C). The latter property has led to the use of PET for boil in the bag products which are frozen before use and as over bags where they are able to withstand cooking temperatures without decomposing.

Although many films can be metallized, polyester is the most commonly used one. Metallization results in considerable improvement in barrier properties. A fast growing application for polyester is ovenable trays for frozen food and prepared meals. They are preferable to foil trays for these applications because of their ability to be micro wave processed without the necessity for an outer board carton.

Polyamides (Nylon)

Polyamides are condensation products of diacids and diamine. The first polyamide produced was Nylon-6,6 made from adipic acid and hexamethylene diamine. Various grades of nylons are available. Nylon-6 is easy to handle and is abrasion-resistant. Nylon-11 and nylon-12 have superior barrier properties against oxygen and water and have lower heat seal temperatures. However, nylon-6,6 has a high melting point and hence, it is difficult to heat seal. Nylons are strong, tough, highly crystalline materials with high melting and softening points. High abrasion resistance and low gas permeability are other characteristic properties.

Polyvinyl Chloride (PVC)

The monomer is made by the addition of reaction between acetylene and hydrochloric acid. It must be plasticised to obtain the required flexibility and durability. Films with excellent gloss and transparency can be obtained provided that the correct stabilizer and plasticizer are used. Thin plasticized PVC film is widely used in supermarkets for the stretch wrapping of trays containing fresh red meat and produce. The relatively high water vapour transmission rate of PVC prevents condensation on the inside of the film. Oriented films are used for shrink-wrapping of produce and fresh meat. Unplasticized PVC as a rigid sheet material is thermoformed to produce a wide range of inserts from chocolate boxes to biscuit trays. Unplasticized PVC bottles have better clarity, oil resistance and barrier properties than those made from polyethylene. They have made extensive penetration into the market for a wide range of foods including fruit juices and edible oils.

Copolymers

When polythene resins are being manufactured it is possible to mix other monomers with ethylene so that these are incorporated in the polymer molecules. These inclusions alter the characteristics of the polythene. Vinyl acetate is commonly used and the resulting ethylene vinyl acetate (EVA) copolymers display better sealing than modified polythene. Butyl acetate is incorporated with similar effects.

Aluminium foil

Aluminum foil is defined as a solid sheet section rolled to a thickness less than 0.006 inches. Aluminum has excellent properties like thermal conductivity, light weight, corrosion resistance, grease and oil resistance, tastelessness, odourlessness, heat and flame resistance, opacity and non-toxicity. Aluminium foil free from defects is a perfect moisture and oxygen barrier. In all flexible packaging applications using aluminium foil where good moisture and oxygen barrier properties are important, the foil is almost always combined with heat sealing media such as polythene or polypropylene. It is the cheapest material to use for the properties obtained. Foils of thickness 8 to 40 microns are generally used in food packaging. Foil as such is soft and susceptible for creasing. Hence, foil is generally used as an inner layer.

Packaging of fishery products

Packaging materials have to be designed based on the nature of the product that is to be packed. Fish products require packaging that retards spoilage and extend its shelf life over a period. A few fish products and suitable packaging material is given below.

Fish pickles

Fish pickle is a value added item whose bulk is contributed by low value items like ginger, chilly, acetic acid etc. Generally low cost fish, clam meat is used in fish pickles. Conventionally glass bottles are used as containers, which offer properties like inertness, non-toxicity, durability, non-permeability to gases, moisture etc. But they are heavy, prone to break, voluminous and expensive. New flexible packaging materials developed for fish pickle is based on plain polyester laminated with LDPE-HDPE Co-extruded film or Nylon/Surlyn or LD/BA/Nylon/BA/Primacore. These are inert to the product, can be attractively fabricated as stand up packs and can be printed on the reverse side of the polyester film.

Fish soup powder

Fish soup powder is a speciality product containing partially hydrolysed fish, protein, carbohydrates, fat and several other seasonings including salt. The product is hygroscopic and hence the selection of the package assumes great significance. Appropriate package developed for such products are 12 micron plain polyester laminated with LDPE-HDPE co-extruded film or 90-100 micron LD/BA/Nylon/BA/Primacore multilayer films which ensure a safe storage of the product up to six months.

Extruded products

Ready to eat breakfast cereals, pasta, ready-to-eat, snacks, pet foods, and textured vegetable protein (TVP) are prepared by the extrusion process. An extruder consists of one or two screws rotating a stationary barrel and the mixed raw material is fed from one end and comes out through a die at the other end where it gets puffed up due to the release of steam. It is either in the ready to eat form and hence have to be hygienically packed for consumption. The extruded products are highly hygroscopic in nature and hence they should not come into contact with moisture. Since the extruded product contains fat, the product should not be exposed to air. It is also highly brittle and may powder when crushed. Hence packaging films of high barrier strength and low permeability to oxygen and water vapour are required. Generally extruded products are packed in LDPE/metallised polyester laminated pouches flushed with Nitrogen.

Surimi and surimi based products

Surimi is an intermediate product / raw material for processing several value added products like fabricated foods, shrimp and crab analogues and a variety of other products. Surimi requires to be preserved frozen until used for processing different products. For this purpose surimi is generally frozen as rectangular blocks. In order to prevent oxidative rancidity and desiccation care has to be taken to ensure that the frozen block does not contain any voids and that the packaging materials used have low water vapour permeability and low permeability to gases and odours. The packaging materials employed should be sufficiently strong and durable to withstand stress during handling, storage and distribution. LDPE and HDPE packaging films employed for block frozen shrimp are considered safe for surimi.

Fish Sausage

Fish sausage is a minced based product. Surimi is the base material, which is homogenised after mixing with several other ingredients. The homogenised mass is stuffed in synthetic casings like Ryphan (Rubber hydrochloride) or Kurehalon (Vinylidene chloride). The casing is closed using metal rings after which it is heated in water at 85-90°C and then slowly cooled. After drying the surface the sausage is wrapped in cellophane laminated with polythene. Fish sausage is kept at refrigerator temperatures for retail; however when prolonged storage is needed it is better kept frozen. Fish sausage is also processed in polyamide and cellulose and fibrous casing. For thermal processing polypropylene casings are used so as to withstand high temperatures.

Glucosamine hydrochloride

D-Glucosamine hydrochloride is used to cure rheumatic arthritis, and is also used as an additive in the food & cosmetic industry. D-Glucosamine hydrochloride Powder is stored in a cool and dry well-closed container, the temperature should be lower than 25°C, and the relative humidity should not exceed 50%. Glucosamine is packed in polybottle, namely PP or HDPE of 1kg, 500g and 20 g, 1kg metallised bag, 25kg in drums for commercial use and smaller quantities are packed in auto sample vials.

Chitin and Chitosan

Chitin and chitosan are derived from prawn shell waste and is exported in large quantities. The product should be protected against moisture gain as well as microbial and insect attacks. Bulk packaging of chitosan is done in HDPE woven gusseted bag laminated with 100 gauge LDPE liner. Chitosan is also marketed in capsule forms for consumption. Capsules made of gelatin are used for filling chitosan. Since chitosan is in the powdered form or flakes they are filled into the capsules. A particular numbers of capsules are then placed in HDPE containers.

Fish Hydrolysate

Fish Hydrolysate is prepared from fish mince which has contain oil and is undiluted, and so is a richer food source for beneficial microbes and especially beneficial fungi in the soil. It is generally cold-processed and hence retains the amino acids and protein chains as such. Fish hydrolysate is concentrated, and when diluted can be used ideally as soil fertiliser, and is suitable for all soils, crops, ornamentals, trees and vegetables It contains a wide spectrum of major nutrients and trace elements in organic, plant available form. It can be used as a foliar spray, but since the oil is present it may show patches on the leaves. The liquid is generally packed in jars or cans which are made of polypropylene or HDPE.

Fish Meal

Fish meal is a source of high quality protein (60%) and is also rich in omega-3 essential fatty acids EPA and DHA due to the high fat content. Incorporation of DHA and EPA in fish meal will in turn ensure its concentration in the diets of fish and poultry, ultimately reaching the human diet. Hence the packaging should be impermeable to moisture, oxygen and other insects and pests. Fish meal is generally packed in HDPE sacks for bulk transportation. The fishmeal whether in ground or pelletised form should contain moisture 6-12 %. The fat content should not exceed 18% and the final meal should contain at least 100 ppm antioxidant (ethoxyquin). If the temperature exceeds 130 F or 55 C then the ventilation should be kept on hold. The fish meal is generally packed in jute bags, multiwall paper bag which are lined with polythene and in HDPE woven bags with liner.

Fish oils

Fish oils are highly unsaturated and easily susceptible to oxidation when exposed to air. Hence they have to be packed in containers which have high barrier properties which are moisture proof, oil resistant and impermeable to oxygen. Larger quantities of fish oil are mainly packed in LLDE/Nylon films or in glass bottles. Bulk transportation food grade flexitanks made of 4 layered polyethylene and tubular PP. Advantages of using flexitanks are that they can carry 50% more than bottles and therefore will save on storage space, packaging and transportation cost.

Fish oil is also marketed for regular oral dosage in the form softgel capsules. The shell is made of gelatin, water, glycerol or sorbitol. The process of encapsulation is by using the rotary die encapsulation process. The encapsulation process is a FFS operation. Two flat gelatin ribbons manufactured on the machine are brought together on a twin set of rotating dies that contain recesses in the desired size and shape, these cuts out the ribbon into a two-dimensional shape, and form a seal around the outside. At the same time a pump delivers a precise dose of oil through a nozzle incorporated into a filling wedge whose tip sits between the two ribbons in between two die pockets at the point of cut out. The wedge is heated to facilitate the sealing process. The wedge injection causes the two flat ribbons to expand into the die pockets, giving rise to the three-dimensional finished product. After encapsulation, the soft gels are further dried depending on the product. They are then further packed in glass or plastic bottles. The soft gels are also packed as blister packs.

Fish silage

Fish silage is a product made from whole fish or parts of the fish which are mainly processing discards and to which an acid is added. The liquefaction of the fish is brought about by enzymes inherent in the fish. The product is a stable liquid and contains all the water present in the original material. Hence it is in the liquid form. Fish silage is generally stored in huge drums or polycontainers so that they can be transported.

Shark fin rays

Dried shark fin is a traditionally exported item from India. Significant value addition is possible if the rays from the shark fins are extracted and exported in place of shark fins. With the indigenous development of inexpensive and simple technology for extraction of fin rays, export of fin rays have picked up. Moisture resistant packaging having good puncture resistance and sufficient mechanical strength to withstand the hazards of transportation are the major requirements in the packaging employed for shark fin

rays. Polyester / polythene laminates or Nylon based co-extruded films having good puncture resistance are appropriate for shark fin rays. Traditionally dried shark fins are packed as bulk pack in jute sacks. The improved bulk pack consists of high-density polythene woven sack or polypropylene woven sack.

Squalene

Squalene is a natural 30-carbon organic compound obtained from shark liver oil (*Squalus* spp.) which is considered as the richest source of squalene. Since it is highly oxidisable and unstable it is packed in glass bottles preferably amber coloured and under inert conditions. The head space of the bottle should be filled with an inert gas. It is also packed in the capsulated form.

Fish Gelatin

Fish gelatin is odorless, colorless (pale yellow), translucent substance which is hygroscopic in nature. It is prepared from the skin of fishes. Edible fish gelatin is packed in 25kg/bag which has an outer package made of Kraft paper bag or woven poly bag with an inner liner which is water-proof plastic film.

Fish protein concentrate

Fish protein concentrate (FPC) is a substance in which the protein is more concentrated than in the original fish. The product is processed into three different grades based on its purity. The product is spray dried and marketed in the encapsulated form or as powder in woven sacks or glass bottles. Fish Protein concentrate is also marketed in the liquid form in poly bottles.
