

Kortec developing coinjected containers

By Rhoda Miel

PLASTICS NEWS STAFF

CHICAGO — Kortec Inc. (Booth S18019) is expanding its multilayer packaging expertise beyond blow molding, developing coinjection molding for food packaging that could replace metal, foil or thermoformed containers.

The company does not have a commercial application yet, but is in development on multilayer polypropylene that can be used for small containers such as tuna, single-serve fruits or pet foods. The thin-wall technology includes an EVOH barrier and potentially could save up to 20 percent of resin compared to thermoforming, while also allowing greater design flexibility, said Russell Bennett, vice president of sales and marketing, in a June 22 interview at Kortec's NPE2009 exhibit.

"At the moment, we don't know how far we can take the thinness, but we can do more with this," Bennett said.

Like the company's earlier developments with multilayer polypropylene for blow molded containers, the coinjection packages could be hot filled or heat treated, but they will not require

a secondary process. That will simplify production for food processors and open other potential business areas for injection molders.

The containers would offer lighter weight than glass or metal packaging, plus good control over

the wall thickness and shape, allowing companies to differentiate their products on store shelves compared to thermoformed packaging. In addition, the injection molding process has less wasted material than a thermoformed, multilayer sheet, he said.

Kortec is working both with food companies and processors to develop the coinjection process, Bennett said.

The coinjection containers would continue to build on plastics' ability to replace glass and metal in packaging, but now in a new format for Kortec. The company, based in Ipswich, Mass., also has been stepping up its production of multilayer PP bottles with the Gamma-Clear technology developed with Ball Corp. Ball markets the heat-treatable containers in North America with Kortec selling it outside North America.

Since its introduction in 2007, the technology has won over new business, replacing both metal and glass for containers such as fruit, soup and sauce, producing bottles that are lighter to ship and also less prone to breakage.

"This [material replacement] has been a main area of interest right now," Bennett said.



Kortec's range of blow molded products, with preforms in the center

Kortec Inc. photo

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Kortec's multilayer PP blow molded containers and, in the foreground, samples of small coinjection molded food packages