Dairy Packaging Technologist

Technical and product development

Job title	Dairy Packaging Technologist
Department	Technical and product development
Reports to	Technical Manager (or NPD Manager on sites that have one)
Direct reports	None
Location	*[To be confirmed by the employer]*
Contract type	*[Permanent / fixed-term / other]*
Salary and benefits	*[To be confirmed by the employer]*

Job purpose

Owns the packaging specifications for a dairy site, covering bottles, cartons, pots, pouches, films, cases and labels. Chooses materials that protect shelf life, checks they are safe for food contact, runs line trials with production and engineering when a pack or supplier changes, and solves pack faults on the filling and packing lines.

Key responsibilities

Packaging specifications

- Write and keep up to date the specification for every bottle, carton, pot, pouch, film, case and label used on site
- Set the key measurements, material grade, barrier and seal requirements and the limits for each item
- Hold a signed-off specification from the supplier for every item before first use
- Write pack and pallet specifications for customers, including case count, pallet pattern and stacking height
- Keep the specification system current so production, purchasing and quality all work from the same version
- Review specifications when a product, pack size or filling line changes

Materials, shelf life and compliance

- Choose packaging materials that protect the product from light, oxygen and moisture for its full shelf life
- Work with the Dairy Technologist and quality team on shelf-life trials when a pack or material changes
- Check that every food-contact material has a valid supplier declaration of compliance and keep it on file
- Check artwork and labels with the regulatory or quality team before they are approved for print
- Confirm that packaging is fit for the process it goes through, such as hot fill, UHT or freezing
- Keep test and trial records so that any pack can be traced back to its material batch and supplier

Line trials, suppliers and pack faults

- Plan and run line trials with production and engineering when a pack, material or supplier changes, and write up the results
- Approve new packaging suppliers and items, with samples, trial results and documents checked before first use

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- Investigate pack faults on filling and packing lines, such as leaking seals, poor opening, print defects or weak cases, and find the root cause
- Raise and follow up complaints with suppliers until the fault is fixed and the fix is proven on the line
- Hold back any packaging that fails an incoming check or a line trial, and record the result and the action taken
- Give practical advice to line operators and engineers when a new pack is introduced

Cost, waste and improvement projects

- Lead projects to cut packaging cost, for example lighter materials, thinner films or a better case design, without harming product protection
- Measure packaging waste on the lines and work with production to reduce it
- Lead recyclability projects, such as moving to mono-materials or recycled content, and check they run on the existing lines
- Review new packaging ideas from suppliers and bring forward the ones that fit the site
- Support new product development with packaging options, costs and lead times
- Report project progress, savings and risks to the Technical Manager

Qualifications and experience

Essential

- Degree, HND or equivalent in packaging technology, food science, materials science or a related subject, or equivalent experience
- Experience in a packaging or technical role in a food or drink factory
- Working knowledge of packaging materials and how they behave on filling and packing lines
- Ability to write clear specifications and trial reports
- Good computer skills, including spreadsheets and a specification or document control system
- Able to work on the factory floor during line trials, including occasional early starts, late finishes or night shifts

Desirable

- Professional packaging qualification, for example a diploma in packaging technology
- Experience with dairy packaging formats, for example HDPE bottles, gable-top or aseptic cartons, thermoformed pots, flexible films and shrink wrap
- Knowledge of food-contact material requirements and supplier declarations of compliance, as required where the job is based
- Experience of shelf-life trials and barrier testing
- Knowledge of HACCP and a food safety standard such as BRCGS, FSSC 22000 or similar, as required where the job is based
- Experience running line trials and working with engineering on machine settings
- Knowledge of artwork approval and label content checks
- Experience of recyclability or packaging reduction projects

Skills and attributes

- Attention to detail
- Clear, practical writing for specifications and reports
- Methodical problem solving on pack faults
- Good working relationships with suppliers, production and engineering
- Organised, able to run several projects at once
- Numerate, comfortable with costs, measurements and trial data
- Hands-on approach on the factory floor

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Measures of success

- Every packaging item in use has a current, signed-off specification
- Supplier declarations of compliance in place for all food-contact materials
- Line trials completed on time with results written up and agreed with production
- Pack-related complaints from customers and consumers reduced
- Packaging faults and line stoppages caused by packaging reduced
- Cost, waste and recyclability projects delivered to plan
- No artwork or label errors reaching print

Working conditions and safety

Mainly day-based, split between an office and the factory floor, with time on filling and packing lines during trials and fault investigations, which may mean early starts, late finishes or occasional night shifts. Some travel to suppliers and customers. Factory areas can be noisy, cold or wet, with moving machinery; PPE and training are provided.

- Follow health and safety rules and safe systems of work, and wear the correct PPE
- Follow food safety, hygiene, HACCP and quality procedures at all times
- Report hazards, accidents, near misses and concerns promptly

This job description outlines the main duties of the role. It is not a complete list, and the employer may update it as the business changes, in consultation with the jobholder.

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