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FRESH FOOD (/FRESH-FOOD)

Prioritize Food Safety— and Sustainability—While Keeping Costs Low

*Sponsored content from our partner **Kwik Lok** (/sponsor/kwik-lok) on Sep. 10, 2020*

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Grocery store retailers are no strangers to prioritizing food safety—or to seeking low-cost solutions to do so. But as the pandemic raises a new crop of health concerns and drives shoppers to focus on safety more than ever, a retailers' safety practices can mean the difference between a repeat customer and a lost opportunity for a sale.

Food packaging alone can make or break a product's sales performance. With the beginning of the pandemic came a wave of consumers stocking up on dry, canned and frozen goods in lieu of items on the fresh perimeter and in the bakery. Prepackaged items provide a guarantee that the food inside hasn't been touched by other shoppers, while often boasting an extended shelf life as well.

In the months following, however, fresh foods saw a resurgence. After a brief slowdown, the bakery saw an unprecedented increase, skyrocketing 62.5% in sales the week of March 15, according to IRI. As of the week ending in July 19, the fresh perimeter saw 13.2% more sales than the same week last year, with both fresh meat and fresh produce seeing above-average sales, according to research by 210 Analytics, IRI and the Produce Marketing Association (PMA). In short: As consumers continue to cook from home, they turn to the fresh perimeter more frequently.

This provides retailers a prime opportunity to leverage consumers' renewed interest in fresh foods by finding ways to bring the safety and extended shelf life of packaged goods to the perimeter of the store. Inexpensive solutions can make a world of difference in this respect: Simple bag closures for fresh vegetables or bread from the bakery, for example, can simultaneously increase shelf life and provide consumers with visible evidence that the food hasn't been touched by other shoppers while decreasing food waste for retailers. And clear labeling provides shoppers a guarantee of freshness while helping store employees remove food that's passed its sell-by date in a timely manner.

Balancing sustainability

Due to the pandemic, many retailers' efforts toward increasing sustainable practices have been placed on the back burner. With sustainable practices often focusing on reducing single-use materials—and pandemic-related sanitation practices often doing the opposite—the balancing act of simultaneously increasing sustainability, boosting food safety and cutting costs can seem daunting.

Sustainability is still important to consumers, however, and retailers will need solutions to meet all of these needs while adjusting to the “new normal.” Fortunately, simple solutions can check every box.

Eco-Lok bag closures from Kwik Lok, for example, are made with up to 20% renewably sourced plant-based resin that emits less carbon in the manufacturing process and only uses up to 20% fossil fuel-based material. Kwik Lok's closure labels reduce food waste by keeping food fresh and safe,

and precise labeling helps only the freshest food remains on grocery store shelves. Plus, compatible machines and printers help reduce labor at the same time.

As many obstacles as the pandemic presents, retailers can find ways to provide the quality, safety and sustainability their customers expect while keeping costs low. To learn more about how Kwik Lok can help retailers boost sales both now and post-pandemic, visit www.kwiklok.com

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