Cristalco and Sonoco
SUCCESS STORY

Packaging Redesign Helps Confectioner Reduce Virgin Plastic by 80%

THE CHALLENGE

Cristalco has been producing sugar, sugar alcohols and bioethanol products for over 50 years. They've long believed in sourcing only the freshest, quality ingredients from sustainable sources out of respect for the planet and its people. Their factories and distilleries regularly practice efficient resource management, traceability and quality assurance in line with their mission. For these reasons, they've made considerable progress to reduce their environmental impact over the years.

By 2019, Cristalco had already reduced the amount of virgin plastic in its primary packaging by 64%; however, they saw an opportunity to further their goals and commitments with the redesign of their 500-g Daddy Sugar icing sprinkler container. The container previously had a polyethylene high-density (PEHD) body with an oriented polystyrene (OPS) sleeve and a polypropylene (PP) lid, a smart choice for the overhaul.

Sonoco committed to meeting consumer preferences with a fully recyclable packaging solution.

Sonoco redesigned the Daddy Sugar Paper Can with fully recyclable paperboard using 68% recycled materials.

Cristalco reduced virgin plastic in primary packaging by 80% in 2024 with the redesign, compared to a 64% reduction in 2019

THE SOLUTION

After five years of research, six technical studies and multiple life-cycle analyses amidst the global pandemic, engineers delivered an ideal, custom solution based on Sonoco's Paper Container line. The new packaging is a rigid paper container made of cardboard with 80% fibre and a custom lid attachment that removes the need for glue (an excess material).

The custom container Sonoco developed in collaboration with Cristalco consists of recycled cardboard with 68% recycled fibre and a thin, PE film inner liner to preserve the sugar and prevent caking from humid conditions. In collaboration with plastics manufacturer Rovip, a new PP lid had been inserted without the use of glue to provide bakers with options – an opening with six small holes for sprinkling and a second, wider opening for pastry making.

The end result allowed Cristalco to accommodate consumer preferences while further reducing the amount of virgin plastic in their company's primary, overall packaging line. Before working with Sonoco, Cristalco achieved a 64% reduction. After working with Sonoco, Cristalco achieved an 80% reduction in 2024 – a 16% improvement!

> *"We're delighted to further our sustainability goals by reducing non-recyclable materials in our packaging with an excellent, more functional alternative solution," said Julie Moréac, Head of Packaging Development and Technical Support at Cristalco. "We're pleased to have worked with Sonoco to develop the ideal design for our product with the most eco-friendly and user-friendly components," said Moréac.*

The new Sonoco containers went to market under both the "Daddy" and "Erstein" brands as of June 2024. They're now accepted at both curbside and paper-recycling streams across France.

ABOUT THE COMPANIES

Cristalco is the commercial entity of Cristal Union, a French agricultural cooperative.

Cristalco markets beet and cane sugar, ethyl alcohol from beet and wheat, bioethanol and ingredients from the stevia plant. A responsible and sustainable partner, Cristalco is an international player - rooted locally and open to the world - present in 80 countries with more than 1,000 products. Visit: cristalco.com.

Sonoco, a more than 125-year-old packaging provider, specializes in all types of packaging, including rigid paper containers for the food and beauty industries.
Learn more: sonocoeurope.com.

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