

Northampton Growers Case Study

The Sustainability Challenge: Finding Produce Packaging that Performs



Cabbage is sorted and packed into Greencoat boxes, the ideal sustainable solution for packing wet, heavy produce.

A push towards recyclable packaging turns into a quest for a product that can stand up to the weight and bulk of cabbage.

Northampton Growers is one of the most respected produce companies in the United States, packing quality produce for distribution to grocery retailers, wholesale and terminal markets. Founded in 1959 on Virginia's Eastern Shore, Northampton Growers now has offices in Virginia, North Carolina, Georgia and Florida. With a goal of providing high-quality product in fresh condition to their customers, packaging that performs plays a key role in their success.

The Problem

Finding the right packaging to ensure produce arrives undamaged while also being cost-friendly is challenge enough, but add in the desired factor of recyclability, and things can get really tough.

A few years ago, at a time when most produce was still being packed in non-recyclable packaging, retailers were beginning to ask if Northampton Growers could deliver their produce in a more sustainable option. The main product they were trying to convert to recyclable packaging was cabbage, which is a heavy item to pack and ship. They tested out multiple recyclable, non-wax packaging products but found that none performed as needed.

The Solution

When Greencoat® was presented as an option, the Northampton Growers' team was skeptical - nothing else had worked, so would this be any different? It was. Greencoat, the only coated recyclable box offered for farmers, performed. Now shipping more than 25 million boxes monthly, Greencoat is a proven sustainable solution.

The Greencoat team worked alongside Northampton and one of their customers to test that Greencoat would perform on the long journeys their produce often endured. They followed a shipment of cabbage from Georgia to Missouri and were thrilled to find their produce arrived in top condition.

The Solution (continued)

Northampton Growers transitioned all of their cabbage shipments to Greencoat and can now see its potential for use with other produce such as peppers and squash.

*“When we were starting this, we said, if you can get packaging that will withstand the weight for the same or better price, then growers will go for it. **Greencoat has fulfilled all those requirements.**”*

- Calvert Cullen, Sales & Co-Owner, Northampton Growers

The Results

From happy customers to cost savings, Northampton Growers has realized numerous benefits from their switch to Greencoat.

Of course, sustainability is one of Greencoat’s major benefits. With each truckload of 770 wax-corrugated boxes, over a ton of waste is sent to the landfill.

Making the switch to Greencoat has eliminated this unnecessary waste and cost. Jeff Cormier, DS Smith Global Sales Manager, says, “When we entered the produce box industry years ago with Greencoat, we had the important goal of saving the farmer and the retailer money while preventing tons of wax boxes from hitting landfills.” Greencoat has done just that for Northampton Growers.



Each Greencoat box is sturdy enough to hold 50 pounds of cabbage and maintain its shape when stacked in the cooler.

By delivering what their customers asked for when no one else was making the effort, Northampton has realized exceptional customer satisfaction. The purchasing department is happy when the produce arrives in fresh condition, the sustainability group is thrilled to have recyclable packaging and the financial team loves that they can actually make money from recycling instead of landfilling their packaging.

Northampton Growers took action and made a hard push to bring recyclable boxes to an industry that was just beginning to think about it. They were proactive in taking the risk to test various products and find one that would perform. They saw that Greencoat was viable and worked on all fronts - getting the product there and providing the retailers with recyclable packaging.

We are Packaging Strategists delivering results:



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We help our customers generate more sales with the right packaging



Lower Cost

We help our customers eliminate unnecessary cost



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We help our customers address risk throughout the supply chain