

PACKAGING TECHNOLOGIES OF COCONUT PRODUCTS IN THAILAND: EQUIPMENTS USED, DESIGN AND BRANDING

Worawat Chinpinkyo*

Thailand is one of main countries in the world which has coconut plantations and famous coconut products to support global consumption.

Since long time ago Thai foods have been well known by many people in the world because of their tasty, spicy and attractive appearance. Most famous Thai foods have Coconut ingredient in the recipe, for example: coconut milk, coconut meat , coconut water etc.

In line with the Thai government policy which promotes Thai foods and Thai food manufacturers to be "**Kitchen of the world**", Thai food will be further promoted. This will encourage people to try Thai taste. Good quality ingredients in recipe are important to make great and tasty foods, therefore Research & Development of coconut products in order to make good ingredients in Thai foods are challenging for coconut product's manufacturers.

Thailand have many major coconut manufacturers and famous Global brands. Technology and quality management are major key success factor for this business. The global trend needs convenient consumption, environmental care and natural ingredient usage. Those elements are important points to consider when manufacturing new products.

Packaging is the key point for customer to buy products in the market. The attractive packaging is the main consideration when starting to design new products.



Packaging Technologies of Coconut Products in Thailand

Long history of exporting Coconut products of Thailand to the world market makes Thai coconut milk & coconut water are famous in the world. The food processing technologies have come from USA & Europe since long time ago. Thai coconut manufacturers have imported these processing technologies and developed them to match with coconut products.

Now local machine manufacturers can conduct a research & development on processing technology and make some machines. For new technology we must find form Europe and USA.

* *Managing Director, C&A Products Co. Ltd., 222 Moo 3, Thumbol Pongsawai, Amphur Muang, Rajchaburi 7000, Thailand. Phone: (66-2) 5797580 ext 135, Fax: (66-2) 9406895 and E-mail: worawat@thaicoconut.com ; warunyu@thaicoconut.com.*

Tin Canned History

The first coconut product or other agricultural products in Thailand start from canning technology. Can is convenient to use, easy to process and this technology needs low investment.

We use can to pack coconut milk and coconut water but it will be substituted by new packaging. In Europe canned products are not appreciated and EU push packer to use new technology and new packaging that is lighter than can and environmentally friendly.



Aluminum Can Technology

Aluminum can comes after Tin can, it is famous for beverage products. The shelf life of Aluminum can is only half of Tin can and it does not have its own strength, Co₂ or Nitrogen must be added to stabilize the shape and strength. Cost of investment is higher than Tin can technology. It is mainly used in beverage, carbonated drink beer, soft drink etc.

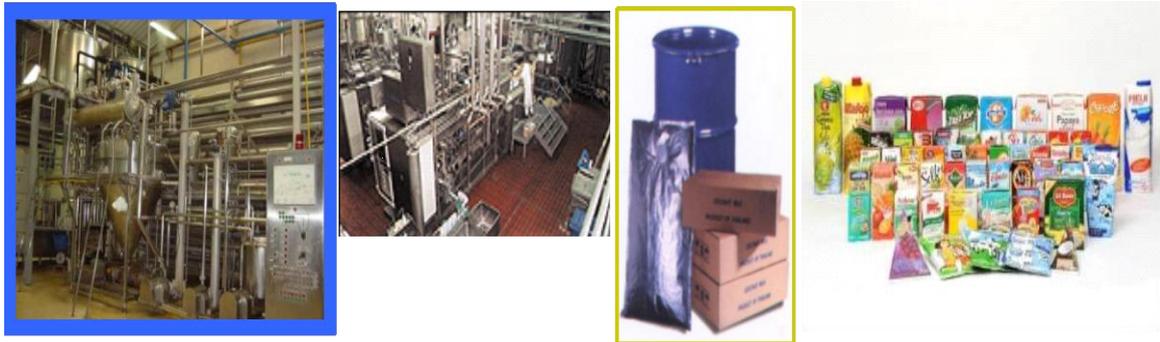
The requirement of high minimum printing for Aluminium can may pose a problem for small manufacturer to use this technology.



UHT Technology

The high demand of metal in the world makes short supply of can. Some of European countries provide UHT technology to substitute can technology. The high cost of start-up investment is a problem for small manufacturers to invest in this technology. The UHT claims that as it uses high temperature and short time processing, it results in higher quality products than canned products.

The shelf life of UHT products cannot be compared with canned products. They only have half life of canned products. Packaging cost per unit is lower than can packaging. UHT Processes can pack big bulk packaged products, for example: 20 liters - 1,000 liters. Europe accepts UHT packaging as is environmentally friendly and easy to recycle and the shape has more varieties than can. This technology is faster to develop than can technology.



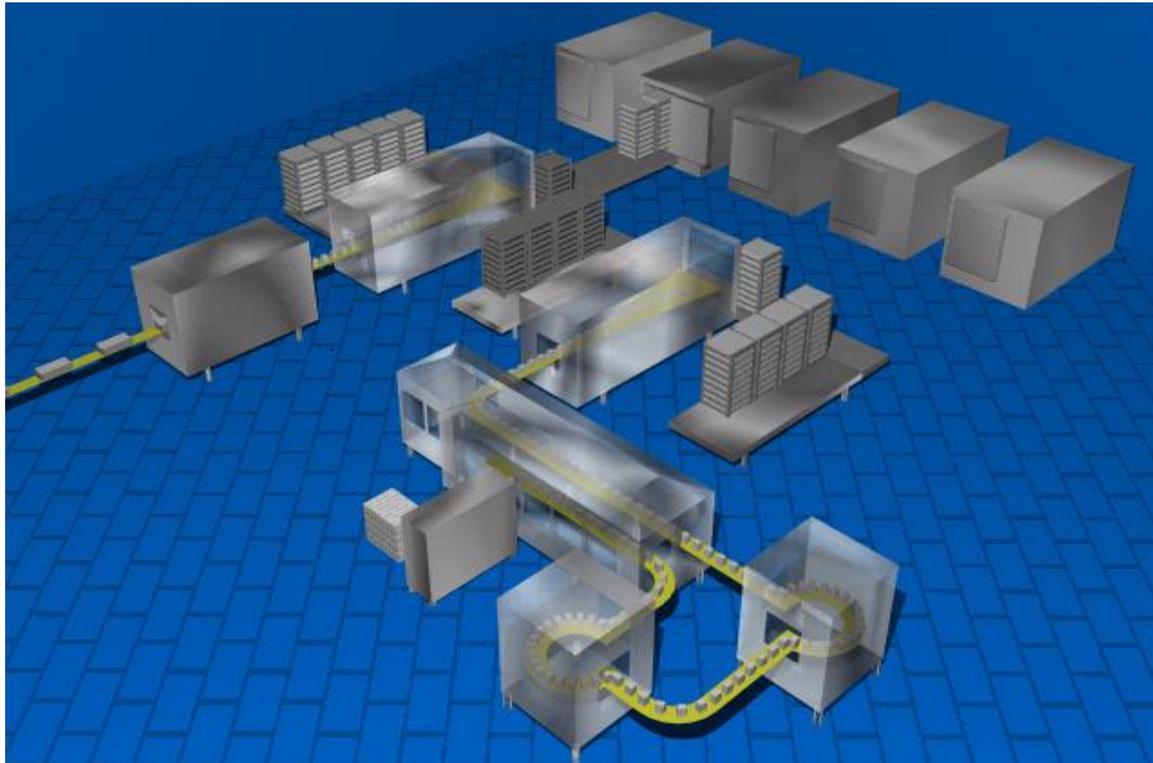
High Barrier Plastic Cup Technology

It is the newest technology to substitute canning technology. This packaging concept is for sterilized products similar to canning processes, but it uses plastic to substitute Tin can and Aluminium can. The shelf life is same as that of Aluminium can and UHT which is not longer than one year after production. High barrier plastic cup technology is first used in USA, now it is used for high value products for example: ready meal, soup, tuna etc. This technology solves the Tin can short supply in some seasons or high demand of metal. The cost of investment is similar to Tin can technology.



Retortable Multilayer Paper Box

This technology is provided by Tetra Pak. It is a new concept to substitute canning technology. The cost of investment is very high therefore it is not widely used. The requirement of high minimum printing is a problem for a small manufacturer. In addition, it has higher cost of packing compared with UHT packing. Thailand has only 1 manufacturer which uses this technology to pack sweet corn.



Packaging & Products Design of Coconut Products in Thailand

Domestic Products

Thailand coconut products are mainly produced for export to foreign countries. The high demand for local consumption is on fresh nut, young and mature nut. Domestic consumption of processed coconut products is mainly in UHT coconut milk. These products are sold in the market more than 10 years. The design does not change so much. The designer puts all detail in square box shape. Most designs have not changed since they were launched.



Export Products

The design concept of products & packing for exported coconut products has been following the global trend. The change is very dynamic following the change of global trend. The global trend now requires the manufacturers show most details and benefits of products in packing in order to make the customer easy to read.

Thailand exported coconut products are mainly as follows:

- Canned Coconut Milk
- Canned Coconut water
- UHT Coconut Milk
- Aseptic Coconut Milk in bulk packed
- Coconut Milk Powder

Most designs follow customer requirements.



