



The five-colour Gallus Labelfire E 340 is designed to provide the OEM's lowest cost of entry for digital-hybrid flexo label printing. It offers the same reliability and 1 200 x 1 200 dpi image quality as the eight-colour, fully-featured version without the orange, violet and green inks. The system is integrated into Heidelberg's Prinect print media workflow and can have further embellishing options, including screen and cold foil, added as the need arises.

## Labelling trend predictions

**DURING 2018, consumers and lobby/activist groups started pressurising major retailers, brand owners, raw material suppliers and converters to improve packaging sustainability levels to decrease pollution levels in the oceans and other waterways.**

This lobbying has resulted in the formation of new non-profit organisations (backed by the industry value chain) aimed at eliminating packaging waste, as well as serious questions being asked at design concept stage about how the packaging can be made more environment-friendly (see pp 15 & 17 for details).

The government's call for the development and submission of industry waste management plans to comply with the National Environmental Management: Waste Act 529 of 2008 and Government Notice 41303, will put further pressure on packaging manufacturers, label converters/printers and recycling organisations to review their policies and practices to ensure they're aligned with the plan submitted by Packaging SA (on behalf of the packaging industry) in September 2018, remarks Wicus Maritz, Rotolabel's MD.

'Sustainable packaging is a very complex subject, which needs to be understood from end to end,' adds sales director, Grant Watson. 'It's not just what ends up on the product that's important because the upstream processes can be more damaging than the actual end product.'

The difficulty, he points out, is that designers, brand owners and retailers need to provide packaging that's sustainable and recyclable, while helping extended producer responsibility organisations and government agencies to educate consumers around substrates' recyclability and sustainability credentials plus correct separation at source practices to ensure that the pack ends up in the right recycling stream, otherwise it will ultimately be landfilled.

Grant asserts that although labelling has a negative connotation in some instances, it can assist in making packaging more sustainable. 'Printed packaging, for example, contaminates recycled materials, resulting in a lower stream grade of recycled product. The quality of the regrind can, however, be improved by using a label that's designed to "come off" the bottle/container cleanly for easy separation in the recycling stream. The key is applying the correct label material to the right packaging format to ensure ease of recycling.'

Furthermore, given consumers' varying tastes, the vast number of SKUs available and the fact that labels

can practically be printed on demand and in smaller quantities, Grant claims they help reduce the packaging waste caused by product discontinuations because the primary product packaging can be re-used.

Rotolabel, he explains, offers FSC-certified paper products and compostable materials, and is investigating thinner materials that will help reduce labelling's environmental impact. Grant concedes that there are more options available to the company, but that R&D costs inevitably make sustainable options more expensive in the short term. 'These R&D costs will decrease over time as more brand owners and retailers adopt sustainable options,' he maintains. 'However, we need to start somewhere, otherwise we won't make any progress.'

All4Labels South Africa MD, Uwe Bögl, believes that forward-thinking converters are already taking six practical steps to lower the carbon footprint of their self-adhesive labels, shrink sleeves and flexible packaging. These include reducing the material calliper, selecting materials with recycled components, optimising slit sizes, decreasing the amount of ink being transferred and used to set up presses with extended colour gamut printing, as well as substituting foiling with metallised films and lamination with varnish.

He also notes that they can reduce solid waste levels by driving recycling projects in collaboration with suppliers, customers and the recycling industry.

## Press progress

**ADVANCES in the label printing process – from reprographics and platemaking to printing and finishing – are aimed at reducing turnaround times, set-up and run material waste; improving process capability (with little variation) and quality (advances in colour management), as well as reducing skills requirements from an operator and machine minder perspective,' claims Wicus Maritz, MD of Rotolabel.**

'Given the sector's increasing skills shortage and converters' reliance on in-house resources and training programmes, these advances contribute to getting more for less,' Wicus states.

In addition, LED curing lamps are likely to replace the current mercury-based UV lamps because they generate significant power savings that will become too hard to ignore, especially given Eskom's electricity supply and tariff increase issues, asserts Lee Barnard, sales executive at Redfern Long Run Labels.

