

CDP and EFI Nozomi inkjet technology bring sweet success to Bland Farms

Vidalia® sweet onions, a variety of onion native to Vidalia, Georgia, were originally discovered accidentally, when farmers hoping onions would be their next big cash crop during the Great Depression grew an unfamiliar, sweet tasting onion. Close to a century later, the success of Bland Farms is no accident: The family-owned and operated business set its sights on perfecting the sweet onion ever since its first successful growing season in 1982, and it is now the world's largest sweet onion grower, packer and shipper.

The popularity of Vidalia onions has exploded over the decades, growing from seasonal produce in the southern U.S. to being available all year round and available in all 50 states. And, according to data the Vidalia Onion Committee, demand is still on the rise, representing 62% of sweet onion sales and 22 percent of total onion sales. On top of this, the pandemic has served as a major boost for grocery retail. According to consumer data company Statista, U.S. grocery sales grew by 233% between August 2019 and March 2020, and a further 80% from March 2020 to June 2020. The crush of demand for all things grocery invites more competition, so even an industry leader like Bland Farms wants to look out for new ways to stand out from the crowd.

Greater design flexibility

Traditionally, Bland Farms has used flexo printing for its corrugated display bins, limiting its ability to change designs quickly or switch between temporary promotions. Meg Robinson, sales and marketing manager, Vidalia Brands and Bland Farms, explains: "We wanted something new and innovative to offer to our customers and the retailers, something that would make our products stand out. We wanted the ability to display them in different areas of the store and make changes frequently for when we have different promotions to run."

That's where Complete Design and Packaging (CDP) – Bland Farms' corrugated display printing partner and home to the U.S.'s first EFI™ Nozomi single-pass inkjet digital corrugated printer –



Challenge:

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MEG ROBINSON,
SALES AND MARKETING MANAGER





Headquartered in Glennville, Georgia, Bland Farms is the largest grower, packer, and shipper of sweet onions in the United States. Bland Farms represents roughly one quarter of the entire Vidalia® sweet onion volume, and has the largest controlled-environment storage capacity in the industry. Bland Farms was the first company in the industry to market sweet onions year-round. In order to meet the needs of customers year-round Bland Farms had to expand growing operations beyond the borders of Georgia, across the United States, and internationally. Our strategically located operations result in the highest quality, freshest, and sweetest onions available to consumers and retailers today.

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Bland Farms partners with Complete Design and Packaging for its corrugated displays. CDP's Nozomi single-pass inkjet digital corrugated printer - the first in the USA - gives Bland Farms the power to utilize shorter runs, quick turnaround times, and design flexibility, without compromising on quality.

comes in. Designed as a replacement for litho and flexo printing, CDP's Nozomi C18000 Plus offers high-quality, single-pass, digital inkjet direct-to-board production, and can print at speeds up to 246 linear feet per minute, in up to seven colors, including white.

Equipped with the Nozomi printer, CDP gives Bland Farms the power to utilize shorter runs, quick turnaround times, and design flexibility, without compromising on the quality of the packaging produced. In an online video, Howard Bertram, CDP's president, details how EFI Nozomi technology delivers digital production flexibility and its premium capabilities as a digital, direct-to-board alternative to analog production. "The print quality is phenomenal," Bertram says. "When people see the print samples or production pieces from this machine, typically their first thought is, 'hey, that's exactly like litho label.' The Nozomi is the solution for us. It's our future."

"Digital affords [CDP's customers] to be so flexible, so quick, and market right down to the neighborhood, not nationally but regionally," Bertram also notes. "You can't do that efficiently with flexo or litho label."

Solution:

"If we want to do a display bin for a limited time, we won't have to print 200,000 of them to justify doing it."

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Faster turnaround for high-end displays

Integrating digital print into its marketing strategy has allowed Bland Farms to switch display designs with ease to ensure the brand is always grabbing customers' attention at the point of purchase. Bland Farms was also able to maximize a successful promotion by leveraging digital's rapid turnaround times to get the popular display back in stores quickly.

When the company collaborated with Paramount Pictures to produce promotional POP displays to coincide with the release of "The SpongeBob Movie: Sponge on the Run," the promotion, originally printed using flexo, was a big hit. When many more were required, it was the Nozomi to the rescue. Meg Robinson says: "We ended up needing more of the boxes quickly, and the turnaround for Complete Design and Packaging getting those to us was very, very short. It wouldn't have been possible getting them back that quickly with flexo."

"The ability to change things out has been a great benefit," she adds. "We have bins for our premium sweets, for organics and for our Vidalias, and so just being able to replace those and not have to order such large quantities has been great. When we switched over to the SpongeBob promotion, being able to switch design easily and not having to deal with the plates, that's definitely been a perk of the digital. If we want to do a display bin for a limited time, we won't have to print 200,000 of them to justify doing it."

The flexibility and ease of the displays printed using the Nozomi comes with an additional perk, outstanding quality. Meg Robinson explains: "I think that on the SpongeBob displays that were printed digitally, the colors are much more vibrant with more detail than we would have been able to do on flexo. Both of the onion display bins designed and printed on digital so far have allowed us to have more detail and better color."

An additional competitive edge through digital print could be on the horizon for Bland Farms, as the business explores versioning and variable data opportunities that will allow them to specifically target customers based on location and local interests.

"That's something we're really starting to look into, especially in terms of which charities specific retailers are donating to and how we can tie into that," explains Robinson. For example, Bland Farms has explored partnering with Kroger, the largest supermarket company in the U.S., on Kroger's Zero Hunger Zero Waste Foundation. Digital production on the Nozomi C18000 Plus would enable Bland Farms to cost-effectively produce high-quality bins that promote the foundation's cause.



Result:

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