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Everything old is new again. Why canned goods are good for the environment.

Frozen food ingredients have long been considered the optimal format for preserving freshness, texture and flavor. Truitt Brothers, a food processing company in the Willamette Valley of Oregon, has developed new ways to enhance the quality of canned and vacuum-packed food items that have quality and flavor levels comparable to frozen items—and do so in a more eco-friendly way than frozen items.

Peter Truitt, President of Truitt Brothers, notes, 'When we (consumers) evaluate a product or service we tend to evaluate the here and now, the present, without honestly reflecting on the upstream implications—how the product gets to us—and the downstream—what happens to the product packaging after we're done with it.'

Shelf stable, canned and vacuum-packed items have a more positive environmental impact than their frozen counterparts. Frozen distribution and storage is a huge source of CO₂ because of the gases sent into the atmosphere from the coolants used in refrigerated equipment. These coolants are present in both refrigerated trucks and the cold storage equipment operators have back-of-house. In addition, shelf stable products are fine without refrigeration for 18 months and beyond. Operators save energy because they can manage with fewer frozen or refrigerated walk-ins or equipment, so there are energy savings throughout the distribution and use of these products.

Truitt adds, 'If an operator is serious about doing better for the environment, they can't ignore dry storage items such as canned goods.'

