The first stage involved a joint meeting between the category buyers and suppliers, managed by the packaging team, who also provided the key impetus for this meeting. The session focused on two key questions: “Why is meat packaged in a tray? And how else can meat be sold?” [RB9]. The meeting generated a number of points, but the two main themes were:

- **Why is meat in a tray?** - it was agreed that this was partly due to the need for gas flushing to extend shelf life, which also reduced meat wastage as the meat could go brown without sufficient amounts of it. The use of a tray was also influenced by consumers’ dislike of the feel of the meat.

- **How else could we sell meat?** - the main topic of this discussion became the fact that butchers just put meat in a bag, and “the team questioned why this couldn’t just be done with packaged meat too” [RB10].

From this, the next phase investigated the use of bags to pack meat with gas flushing. The team “recognized that this could be done on crisps and therefore must be possible for meat in bags” [RB9].

The team contacted a number of packaging suppliers, and discussed the project at regular meeting held with their existing suppliers. Subsequently, a number of alternatives were evaluated, including block bottom packs, doy packs, pouches, and flow packs. Each was examined to establish whether they could deliver the required aesthetics, environmental and cost benefits. In addition, the machinery and expenditure required were also taken into account. The team also began to consult with an industry body, to assist in the evaluation of each pack’s environmental impact and safety.

The following stage involved evaluating the concept with consumers, using focus groups and in-branch tests (which involved showing a simple bag-based format to consumers in stores). This was undertaken by an external marketing consultancy organization, due to “concerns with the effect of a gas flushed flow wrapped bag on consumers’ perceptions… and [the product’s] shelf presence” [RB11].

The analysis focused on consumers’ responses and behaviors. The results identified two key issues: “Firstly, consumers did not like the look of blood in the packaging… and secondly, it was found that the main issue was that consumers did not like touching the meat, some even described themselves as having a ‘fear of touching meat’” [RB11]. Having identified these concerns, the buying team were concerned...
about proceeding, due to the potential to damage sales. Buyers were “responsible for meeting targets and don’t want product wastage”, hence they were concerned about risk, and wanted “to be sure it’s the right thing for their category” [RB13]. The head of the packaging team convinced them to continue with the project.

The next stage investigated the investments and feasibility of each format. The internal team worked closely with suppliers to investigate the costs in training, developing new materials, and how the line would need to be adapted for gas flushing. Due to lack of internal knowledge with which to undertake a lifecycle assessment, the firm worked with WRAP to look at CO2 outputs and other environmental assessments. This allowed them to evaluate the trade-offs in each area. The results “…didn’t show any significant differences in consumers’ perceptions of the packs, [therefore] we decided to use a simple flow wrapped gas flushed bag, which would also be cheaper…. both in terms of machinery and unit costs for the packs themselves… [this was] particularly well received by buyers…they became very supportive of the project” [RB9]. The bag was also found to have the lowest material usage; and hence, was best for the environment. A decision was reached to launch this new pack initially on two product lines - beef joints and cubes - to limit risks and identify any issues.

Having established the format and products on which this would be launched, the next stage was the acquisition of equipment. A joint decision was made to rent the equipment for the packaging line, as this would cut risk through lower levels of capital investment. A decision could be made later as to whether a permanent line would be purchased. However, it was still necessary for the retailer and manufacturer to make a joint investment of £110,000 in a piece of testing machinery, to ensure there were no leaks in the packaging. The packaging team undertook the required technical development together with a packaging and materials supplier, to establish the correct plastic material to be used.

The following stage involved production line tests, focusing on whether bubbles appeared between the meat and the plastic pack (which would not look visually acceptable), scientific tests on the effects of the pack on the meat and its longevity, and tests to ensure there were no inconsistencies between units. These tests were undertaken on the entire range of meats, due to the longer term desire to expand the use of this packaging. This also allowed for the possibility of identifying a particular
issue with beef that would result in a need to initially trial the pack on another form of meat.

The results highlighted issues with the two meat products. First, chicken products with the skin still on had problems with the colour of the skin. This was noted for future development. Second, cubes of beef were prone to some discolouration. The category team was also concerned with the feel of the cubes in the bag, which had been highlighted in prior consumer tests. Therefore, whilst the original intention was to completely cut the need for a tray, a compromise was made, with a small tray added to increase rigidity. This would later be reviewed, alongside a review of the change as a whole, after launch. The supplier continued evaluations as to how discolouration could be resolved, with the aim that this change would also be made after the review period.

The following stage focused on testing whether the bag was suitably resistant to leaks (and if it was effectively sealed), and how to date the pack without damaging the meat. The latter was solved by using a printed film. Tests were also undertaken to establish the shelf life, which found that the same period of time was achievable. Finally, transit trials were undertaken, involving small volumes being distributed to stores to identify how the new packaging performed in the distribution system.

The final stage was the nationwide launch of the product, which had taken a total of 18 months to reach the shelves. The new packaging was launched on six beef product lines (Figure 8.3.7 displays the beef mince packaging). The marketing team undertook activities to generate positive PR based on the environmental benefits of the packaging. Over the following months, the packaging was expanded to a total of twelve lines of beef products. In the year that followed, a total of 1.2 million packs were sold, with only one customer complaint. The team was “extremely pleased with this result, particularly as this created a saving of ninety tonnes of raw materials a year…. and 200 tonnes less usage of CO2” [RB9]. Plans were in place to expand its use over the following year, and remove trays from all meat.
8.3.5 Project G: Development of Packaging for a ‘Wrap’ Sandwich

Case G focuses in greater depth on the development of a proposed new format of packaging for pizzas, and the wraps detailed in the preceding case. This format was initially identified in a meeting with a supplier, who showed the head of packaging a new type of pack which its R&D team had been developing. The manager immediately recognized its potential for a number of products, and took samples to a number of category teams. The process is summarised in figures 8.3.8 and 8.3.9.

Figure 8.3.8: Key stages in the NPD process for case G

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 1:</th>
<th>Stage 2:</th>
<th>Stage 3:</th>
<th>Stage 4:</th>
<th>Stage 5:</th>
<th>Stage 6:</th>
<th>Stage 7:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Problem/opportunity identification</td>
<td>Evaluation of options</td>
<td>Prototyping</td>
<td>Technical trials &amp; evaluation</td>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>Full costs assessment</td>
<td>Evaluation &amp; decision</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>