Sonoco's Award-Winning Retortable Membrane Closure Provides Cost-Effective Convenience

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HARTSVILLE, S.C.--(BUSINESS WIRE)--Nov. 11, 2008--A robust, peelable Ultrapeel(TM) retort membrane end from Sonoco (NYSE: SON), one of the largest diversified global packaging companies, that was specifically designed for heat-and-eat foods, is giving today's economy-minded, on-the-go consumer an easy and inexpensive way to enjoy a hot and healthy snack on the run.

The first retortable membrane end closure manufactured in the Americas, Sonoco's Ultrapeel membrane can withstand the rigors of thermal processing and is currently being used by one of the largest U.S. soup companies on all 11 varieties of its popular microwavable soup cups. Awarded a 2008 Highest Achievement Award in the Technical Innovation category by the Flexible Packaging Association earlier this year, the unique, consumer-friendly closure is the result of Sonoco's combined technical expertise in retortable laminated structures and convenience closures.

Sonoco Phoenix, Sonoco's leading technology ends and closure business, is using proprietary technology and state-of-the-art equipment to manufacture the retort membrane ends in a 211-diameter for the soup company at its Canton, Ohio, facility. In current print advertising, the customer tells consumers to "look for the new easy peel-off lid" its cups of soup. Consumers like the fact that all they need to do to prepare the healthy snack in its microwavable cup is to remove the plastic cap, peel off the Ultrapeel retort membrane end, microwave the soup, replace the plastic cap and sip the soup.

The Ultrapeel retort membrane end is a membrane structure heat sealed to an aluminum ring. The closure has lower opening forces than conventional scored convenience ends, has no sharp edges and utilizes current double-seam technology requiring minimal seamer modifications. Ultrapeel retort membrane ends in 307- and 401 diameters are also planned. Sonoco Phoenix can print random and registered graphics on the end in up to eight colors. According to Howard Coker, division vice president, Rigid Paper and Closures, Sonoco's Ultrapeel retort membrane gives consumer product companies and food processors a new, high-performance, peelable closure option for the fast growing heat-and-eat food category.

"This category is defined by convenience and making it easy for people to safely enjoy their favorite soups, pasta entrees, meats and seafood in packaging that doubles as a serving container. Our challenge was to deliver a membrane end capable of withstanding the rigors of a retort process involving over-pressure. The robust Ultrapeel retort membrane end survives the challenge of pressure fluctuations typical of many over-pressure controlled retort processes," said Coker. "Customers are excited about our Ultrapeel end because it allows them to deliver an innovative consumer package without sacrificing manufacturing efficiencies. It can be seamed at high speeds on existing equipment with just minor modifications and processed in conventional retorts using overpressure." Sonoco Phoenix is among the world's largest producers of aluminum, steel and peelable membrane closures used to add cost-effective convenience to metal, plastic and rigid paper cans and containers. The business operates six manufacturing facilities in the United States.

About Sonoco

Founded in 1899, Sonoco is a $4.0 billion global manufacturer of industrial and consumer products and provider of packaging services, with approximately 334 operations in 35 countries, serving customers in some 85 nations. For more information on the Company, visit our Web site at http://www.sonoco.com/.

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