Comparative Packaging Study
Michele Perchonok and David Antonini
NASA Advanced Food Technology
Johnson Space Center, Houston

Purpose
- Evaluate new high barrier food packaging films for use on long duration space missions.
- Determine the effects of:
  - High temperatures during heat sealing
  - Stress cracking from folds in the film caused by vacuum packing
  - Relative humidity during storage

Deliverables
- Quantitatively evaluate each packaging material after final processing for oxygen and water vapor transmission through analysis of ingredients susceptible to moisture uptake and lipid oxidation.
- Qualitatively determine changes in food product attributes through sensory evaluation methods after storage in 3 different packaging films.
- Evaluate the potential of each packaging material based on qualitative and quantitative results.

Food Sample Selection
- Dry cereal is prone to reduced quality from absorption of water vapor.
- Cottonseed oil is susceptible to lipid oxidation in the presence of oxygen.
- Peanuts produce a rancidity marker, hexanal, which can be quantified by analysis of the gas in the headspace of the package.

Experimental Design Matrix

Permeation Rate Comparison
- The table below shows the oxygen transmission rate (OTR) and water vapor transmission rate (WVTR) for each packaging material in three different conditions.
- Glass and Aluminum have the best available barrier properties for food packaging purposes.
- Temperature and relative humidity may have an effect on the permeation rate of a packaging film.

Packaging Material Information

Combitherm Film
- Structure: Nylon/EVOH/Nylon/High Ethylene Vinyl Acetate Polyethylene/LLDPE
- PROS: Lightweight and transparent. Microwaveable and can be incinerated.
- CONS: Requires an overwrap film due to poor barrier properties. Overwrap causes a major increase in mass for food system.

Techniqaq Film
- Structure: A quadlaminate film. PET/Polyethylene/Aluminum/PEO
- PROS: Best barrier properties available in a film.
- CONS: Film cannot be incinerated or microwaved due to aluminum layer. Film is not clear to allow for food identification.

Tolas Film
- Structure: A PET film coated with a thin layer of aluminum oxide.
- PROS: Very lightweight with excellent barrier properties. Transparent film. Microwaveable and can be incinerated.
- CONS: Stress cracking caused by wrinkles during vacuum packing may reduce the barrier properties.