Consumer demand for organically produced foods continues to generate double-digit growth, providing market incentives for U.S. food producers and packaging companies to stay ahead of the growing demand. According to recent industry statistics, organic food products are now available in approximately 20,000 natural food stores, and nearly three out of four conventional grocery stores.

U.S. sales of organic products grew from an estimated $28.4 billion in 2012 to an estimated $35 billion in 2014, according to the Nutrition Business Journal. Consumers are showing an increasing preference for organically-produced food because of concerns regarding not only health and animal welfare, but also the environment. They have demonstrated a willingness to pay the price premiums associated with organic products. And, they have also become increasingly observant of organic product packaging, routinely scanning for symbols, graphics or text indications of environmental friendliness.

Smithers Pira, a global authority on packaging industry supply chains, recently conducted a survey of key players across the global packaging value chain. One key finding was that 79% of respondents rated “increased exposure of consumers to environmental issues” and “advances in materials technology” as major factors contributing to the growth of environmentally friendly packaging.

One of these advances in materials technology has been the use of solventless lamination to manufacture flexible packaging. According to Adhesives Age Magazine, 25% of all consumer goods today are contained in flexible-packaging materials, which continue to replace traditional rigid packaging, such as folding cartons, bottles, boxes and fiberboard cases and trays. Flexible packaging often requires the laminating (physical bonding) of two or more films to achieve desired properties such as creating a moisture and oxygen barrier, allowing heat seal-ability or enhancing printability. The bonding has traditionally been accomplished by thermal or chemical means with either solvent-based or water-based adhesives.

Solvent-based adhesives, however, are potentially problematic when used for food and pet product packaging applications because the solvent-based adhesives may impart unwanted tastes and odors to the food. While the effect does not render the product unsuitable for consumption, it could be off-putting to customers with an especially sensitive palate or sense of smell. This is especially true for four-legged consumers of pet food and treats. Consider this; dogs have 20-60 times the amount of scent receptors compared to their human owners and a sense of smell up to 10,000 times as acute. Cats typically possess 10-20 times the number of scent receptors and have a sense of smell at least 10 times greater than a human.

Flexible packaging produced using a solventless lamination process can enhance the organoleptic appeal of a product in an environmentally responsible fashion. Some flexible packaging producers like NJ-based LPS Industries have moved entirely to the use of a solventless lamination process. This manufacturing decision also eliminates the potential of the creation and release of VOC’s (volatile organic compounds) into the atmosphere, resulting in a safer workplace and a safer environment. While VOC’s can be destroyed in a post production high tech cleaning process, the cleaning equipment consumes a large amount of energy whose by-product is increasing the amount of GHG’s (greenhouse gas emissions) associated with the producing the energy required to power the equipment.

Companies like LPS Industries that have committed to solventless lamination for the production of flexible packaging are reducing VOC’s and greenhouse gas emissions while eliminating the need for interaction with and disposal of dangerous solvents.

Responding to the concerns of today’s increasingly aware organic food brands and consumers, LPS Industries makes extensive use of the latest generation of VOC-free adhesives in the production of flexible packaging for all of their customers, not just those that produce organic consumer goods. The company also continues to test emerging adhesive technologies to achieve even higher levels of packaging performance and environmental friendliness.

About LPS Industries
LPS Industries was founded in 1959 by John M. Robinson as a converter of military specification barrier materials. Today, under the direction of Madeleine D. Robinson, CEO, LPS Industries is a diversified manufacturer and leader in the flexible packaging industry, providing packaging solutions for a diverse range of markets, including medical, food, transportation, electronics and agricultural. LPS Industries is an ISO 9001:2008 registered company and a woman owned and operated enterprise. For more information on the company’s products and services, please visit www.lpsind.com.