

Indian focus for strategic growth

GEA Pharma Systems has opened a new factory in Vadodara, Gujarat, to service India and provide reduced-cost manufacturing of high-technology solid dose and liquid pharma processing equipment for local and global market.

The factory will offer strategic low-cost manufacturing, initially manufacturing fluid bed and granulation technology, allowing the company to provide European-quality processing equipment at prices affordable to the growing Indian market.

"India is a high-growth market that's very price-sensitive and open to new technology," said Navin Lakhanpaul, regional manager, GEA Pharma Systems in Vadodara. "This low-cost manufacturing base will allow us to provide the high-end, European quality products our Indian customers need."

By employing local staff and sourcing peripheral equipment such as control systems locally, GEA Pharma Systems says it will also boost local economies: "In most projects, around 70 per cent of the project value is in peripheral equipment. It's also



essential for us to keep the technical know-how close at hand to help maintain an efficient after-sales service."

The effects of low-cost manufacturing, locally-sourced peripheral equipment and reduced transportation costs often lower the equipment price by some 40 per cent when compared with equipment bought from Europe, explained Navin. He added: "Not only do Indian customers want to supply the local market with high-quality products they also want the facilities necessary to sell into Europe and offer manufacturing services to

European customers."

Describing the facility as critical to the company's long-term plans, Frans Maas, GEA Pharma Systems' division director for sales and marketing, said: "The new factory is part of our strategy for sustainable global supply."

The announcement follows two new agency agreements with ACE Technologies, Mumbai, for the distribution of MODUL™ tablet presses from GEA Courtoy and pharmaceutical freeze drying technology from GEA Lyophil throughout India. T: +44 (0) 2380 267131 E: info@geapharmasystems.com

French Creation

French manufacturer of tray sealing and thermoforming equipment Mecaplastic has acquired Creation Technique to consolidate its position in food, pharmaceutical, cosmetic and industrial markets and to offer complete product lines to customers.

Better known by its brand name MULTIBOX, Creation Technique supplies cardboard container sealing machines as well as 'Pick and Place' integrated solutions for primary packaging. The acquisition is part of Mecaplastic's development strategy to become the 'main player' in the field of integrated solutions

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New to the UK

Self-adhesive labelling systems' specialist, Herma UK, has become the sole UK supplier for print & apply systems from United Barcode System (UBS). Although well established in mainland Europe as well as North & South America, the UBS range of industrial print & apply systems has not previously been available in the UK.

The UBS 'APL' range is designed to provide high-efficiency labelling of case outers and pallets. It features mechanics, pneumatics and electronics integration to ensure its suitability for use in demanding industrial environments, said Herma UK.

Herma will be at Total Processing and Packaging 2010, May 25 - 27, Birmingham NEC, Stand 5446.

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Krones sink into the red

The global economic crisis has been blamed for Krones falling into the red in 2009 for the first time in nine years.

However, the fourth quarter showed a discernible turnaround with a plus of 10 per cent compared with the already weakening fourth quarter of 2008.

Market leader for beverage

filling and packaging technology, Krones saw demand in the packaging machinery market fall worldwide by more than 25 per cent. With the exception of China, all regions were affected by a significant decline, particularly North and South America, also Eastern Europe and Russia, the group reported.

Order bookings fell by 18 per cent in 2009 compared with 2008 to €1,916m. Consolidated sales in 2009 fell by 22 per cent to €1,865m compared with a record year of €2,381m in 2008.

Krones is cautiously optimistic for 2010 and anticipates a turnaround in the overall trend for the first half of 2010.



John Craig, managing director of Halo has welcomed links with the PPMA

Halo for PPMA

Halo has entered into a partnership agreement with the Processing and Packaging Machinery Association (PPMA) to offer a range of multimedia based 'On Demand' e-learning and support packages to members and the end-user community in the food, beverage and pharmaceutical industries.

Chris Buxton, PPMA CEO commented: "Member companies and their customers need to introduce greater efficiencies into their operations, so any new facility which enables more efficient training of staff and operation of production processes, both in-house and in the field, is a great asset."

PPMA and Halo will offer a range of multimedia based support packages to equipment manufacturers, plant integrators and end users in all sectors of the processing and packaging industries.

The On Demand Training and On Demand Support products may be used to support individual pieces of equipment, complete production lines or process systems.

Supplied simultaneously with new installations or developed for existing systems, both products make extensive use of advanced multimedia techniques such as animation, video, screen captures and searchable documents for improved usability.

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More realism post election?

A snap poll from the Forum of Private Business found that nine out of ten smaller businesses were disappointed by the Budget. Just five per cent of respondents believed Alistair Darling's proposals would create business development opportunities, while 87 per cent said the Chancellor's measures would not increase business or consumer confidence.

The results have to be tempered by the view that most respondents are not taking the Budget too seriously because of the May 6 general election. Some 70 per cent said they expect a more realistic budget to be delivered after the election.

Asked how they rated the budget overall, only 10 per cent of forum members described it as 'good' or 'very good'; 52 per cent branded it 'average' and 38 per cent 'poor' or 'very poor'.

There was widespread anger at the planned hike in National Insurance rates, with 45 per cent saying the Budget had a negative impact on employment.

Nonetheless some specific measures included in the Budget should help some SMEs said FPB chief executive Phil Orford. For example, the creation of a



credit adjudicator for small firms, the extension to HMRC's Time to Pay scheme and new targets aimed at helping small businesses get more public sector contracts.

PPMA CEO Chris Buxton added, "There is no doubt that there are certain parts of the budget which in isolation would help UK businesses. However, it is the consolidated impact of the overall economic policy that matters and British businesses are justifiably cynical."

Just below nine per cent of those surveyed said they believed the Budget was designed to encourage short-term recovery. And around 19 per cent said the Chancellor's measures would have a positive impact on both cash flow support and business investment.

www.fpb.org

Consumer needs not retailer wants

In a series of lectures at the recent Foodex exhibition Chris Williams, managing director of Omori Europe, challenged some accepted thinking on packaging minimisation and reduction.

He outlined his rationale in a lecture entitled 'Reducing Packaging - a Rational Approach?' In it he discussed the techniques for packaging reduction in the wider context of overall environmental cost. He said a trend towards packs for the benefit of the retailer rather than the consumer was becoming apparent.

The advantages of MAP, for example, were lost as soon as the pack is opened but using compartmentalising MAP packs for meat, fish and dairy products would help the consumer and reduce spoilage.

Williams argued that technology can help to achieve both a longer shelf-life and waste minimisation, but added that packaging must still be sufficient to do its job effectively, the benefits far outweighing any environmental impact.

Some consumers, he said, re-pack products such as meat from multipacks for freezer storage which defeats the object of reducing packaging.

EAMA sees positive start to 2010

Companies started 2010 with strong UK and export business performance according to the latest Engineering and Machinery Alliance (EAMA) Business Monitor.

In January 2010, UK mechanical engineering companies reported their strongest month on month enquiry growth at 42 and 58 per

cent gains respectively; orders rose for 47 per cent in both UK and export business.

Martin Walder, EAMA chairman commented "January is the fourth month in a row that UK and export prospects have both produced a positive balance.

"What is especially good news is that nearly half of all

companies are reporting higher order levels too".

There may be an improvement in investment sentiment with 22 per cent of companies investing in staff training and development, and a further 17 per cent in all areas of the business, making nearly four in 10 overall.

www.eama.info

Getting fresh with cryogenic freezing

A cryogenic freezing solution that allows manufacturers to freeze individually quick frozen (IQF) and non-IQF food products in a single machine has been introduced by Air Products.

Its Freshline® DM tunnel freezer is said to provide significant capital savings while the two-in-one freezer is also claimed to offer improved IQF

quality in seafood, meat and poultry, vegetables, fruit, dairy produce and pasta.

UK frozen food retail sales in the UK are now touching £5bn with many users of mechanical and cryogenic freezing systems looking to increase capacity or extend their product lines, explained Air Products.

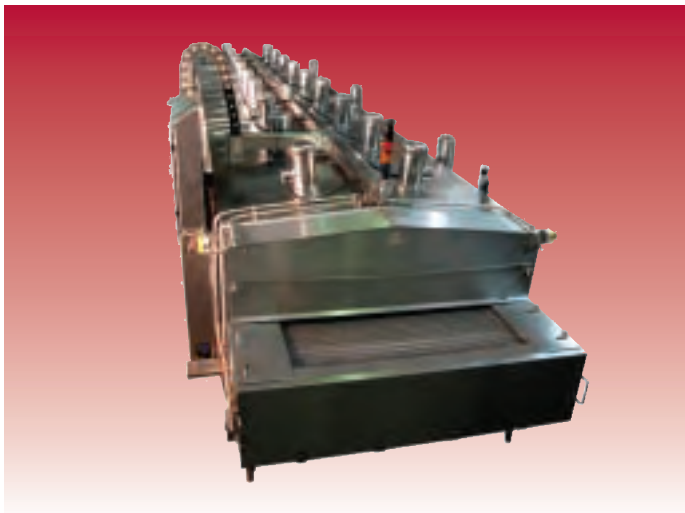
Advantages claimed include: Operators can switch easily

between IQF and non-IQF products without the need to change equipment; the DM tunnel freezer maximises uptime and optimises efficiency; while the system gives producers and contract manufacturers the ability to adapt quickly to changing market demand.

The dual mode freezer has a small footprint and can be installed alongside existing freezing equipment. It is capable of handling up to 1,800 products/hour. Freshline's DM tunnel also offers rapid and consistent cryogenic cooling resulting in smaller ice crystals, which reduce hydration loss during the freezing process and subsequent thawing.

The retention of moisture through cryogenic freezing improves final product quality and maximises value, added Air Products.

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Standing up for human rights

Widespread mistreatment and exploitation of migrant and agency workers in the meat processing industry has been reported by the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

The inquiry uncovered frequent breaches of the law and licensing standards in meat and poultry processing factories - some of which supply the UK's biggest supermarkets - and the agencies that supply workers.

It also highlighted conditions which flout minimum ethical trading standards and basic human rights. Workers reported

physical and verbal abuse; a lack of proper health and safety protection; and the treatment of pregnant workers was a particular concern. Many workers had little knowledge of their rights and feared raising concerns would lead to dismissal.

Examples of good practice by some companies benefitted their businesses by attracting and retaining well motivated, loyal and increasingly skilled workers.

Recommendations include: supermarkets improving auditing of suppliers; processing companies and agencies

improving recruitment practices, working environments and the ability of workers to raise issues of concern; and for the Government to provide sufficient resources for the Gangmasters' Licensing Agency to help safeguard the welfare and interests of workers.

The Commission will review action taken over the next 12 months by supermarkets, processing companies and recruitment agencies, and will consider taking enforcement action.

www.equalityhumanrights.com

BUSINESS BRIEFS

Advanced Dynamics, supplier of feeding, labelling, wrapping, bagging and packaging solutions, is extending its facilities in Yorkshire to include a new 8,000 sq ft showroom.

The announcement follows the launch of its latest range of KöRa-Packmat feeding machines. The showroom will be used to demonstrate solutions such as ultra sonic security sealing or embossing, and for showcasing new machines.

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Chronos BTH has secured a contract valued at £1m to upgrade a fertilizer blending plant in Malaysia. The project involves upgrading a range of Weigh Belt Feeders. The upgraded machines will replace all the feeder frames with fertilizer grade stainless steel housings and material contact parts.

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Smurfit Kappa UK's Packaging Division has been awarded what it believes is the first Carbon Trust Standard for a multi-site packaging company for reducing its carbon footprint by 11 per cent. It reduced CO₂ emissions by 8,000 tonnes over one year, representing a saving of 10kg of CO₂ equivalent for each tonne of product manufactured or processed at its 20 UK sites.
www.smurfitkappa.co.uk

IFFA 2010, the international trade fair for processing, packaging and sales in the meat industry, will open its doors in Frankfurt am Main from May 8 to 13. The event organisers take an optimistic view and anticipate roughly the same number of exhibitors and visitors as 2007.

www.iffa.messefrankfurt.com