

PPMA members launch interpack confidence

The vast majority of Processing and Packaging Machinery Association (PPMA) members going to interpack in May are launching new products and a whopping 96% are expecting the exhibition to be as good as, or better than the last event three years ago.

So says an exclusive survey of PPMA members carried out by *Machinery Update* to judge the levels of business confidence among exhibitors. Over 70% of PPMA exhibitors are launching new products during the event and as one exhibitor said: "It's a great opportunity to show equipment to a wide range of visitors across many industries."

Others believe that the recovery is already underway for them but that it's important to keep its products before customers which is why big trade shows are so important.

Nearly 85% of companies polled are going to use the exhibition to make new contacts but only 8% thought they would sell any machinery directly from the stand. Also,



PPMA exhibitors are expecting great things from interpack in May

many respondents felt the show was a good central point to meet distributors.

About half of the respondents felt the recovery was underway in Europe but only 40% felt the UK was seeing any signs of an upturn. And even though nearly all of the members quizzed were looking forward to an excellent interpack, they were more cautious about what impact this might have on their own businesses.

Asked if they thought exhibiting at interpack would

kick start a recovery for them, only 12% said yes while 20% said no and the rest didn't know.

Visitors to the show – 12-18 May, Düsseldorf – will find 2,700 exhibitors throughout the 19 halls and if the PPMA percentage of new products holds true, it will be a worthwhile visit. As one of the respondents said: "interpack is the biggest gathering of packaging industry professionals in Europe."

Our seventeen page preview starts on page 23.

Domino scoops top prize at PLC awards

Manufacturer of product identification, traceability and digital printing machinery Domino Printing Sciences has been named Company of the Year at the 2010 PLC awards.

The award was presented to group managing director Nigel Bond and finance director Andrew Herbert at a ceremony at London's Grosvenor House Hotel in March.

Incorporated in 1978 and listed on the London Stock Exchange since 1984, the Domino Group reported sales for the year to 31 October 2010 of £300 million. Group managing director Nigel Bond says that



Kate Silverton; Andrew Herbert and Nigel Bond from Domino Printing Services; Matthew Smallwood from College Hill and Ian Powell chairman and senior partner PricewaterhouseCoopers

one factor contributing to last year's performance was the company's strong commitment to research and development, which last year saw a record

spend of £15.6 million.

"As a result of this policy, we were able to launch a whole series of benchmark products," says Bond.

Special offer from CenFRA

The Centre for Food Robotics and Automation (CenFRA), is offering food and drink manufacturers across the UK a £1,000 cheque towards the full cost of a comprehensive audit to help identify areas that could benefit from increased automation.

Each factory audit comprises a detailed performance analysis, improvement recommendations and information on the latest technologies and production processes. Its engineers will also give advice on which automation methods available are the most applicable to that particular food and drink manufacturing sector.

From the initial site review, CenFRA can create a complete bespoke technology roadmap which clearly identifies any hidden production opportunities and evaluates where robotics and automation could improve existing manufacturing or processing systems. CenFRA says these assessments can stimulate ideas and help manufacturers become more aware of emerging new technologies as well as further develop their understanding of the financial savings and practical paybacks that robotic and automated systems can bring.

It has been an uncertain few months in terms of funding for CenFRA who is supported by Yorkshire Forward until the end of March. New managing director Ian Nicholls believes that the organisation will become self sustaining by becoming more active in the marketplace. "We are now deliverers rather than just an advisory service," says Nicholls who has experience at Allied Bakeries, RHM and Mars.

"People have to be brought along with the automation process and we, as an organisation, can deliver that." 01302 765680
www.cenfra.co.uk

It's not time to train SMEs yet

The Time to Train regulations will not be extended this April to employees of small to medium-sized businesses while Ministers take further time to examine the potential impact of the regulation on smaller firms. The right for employees to request time for training to improve their skills has been available to employees of large organisations with 250 or more employees since April last year.

Further Education, Skills and Lifelong Learning Minister John Hayes said: "It is vital to the economy and individuals that everyone has access to the training they need but it is also vital that the right balance is struck between support for training and the need to minimise the burden of regulation for smaller companies.

"We have delayed implementation to allow further, thorough discussion, scrutiny and evaluation."

Positive data for this year

UK mechanical engineering companies started the year strongly as big sector majorities reported increases in inquiries and orders for their UK and export business according to the EAMA Business Monitor.

Nearly half reported increases in their UK inquiry levels while 43% were up on export prospects, producing a positive balance for both UK and export business inquiries. Overall order levels were also up; employment returns were bullish and positive gains for investment activity were also reported.

However, the report reveals working capital remains more difficult to arrange.

Help for export SMEs is welcomed by group

Government measures to help smaller businesses sell their products and services overseas have been welcomed by a leading business group.

The Forum for Private Business (FPB) believes the recent Trade and Investment White Paper, unveiled by business secretary Vince Cable, appears to show that the coalition is serious about helping more SMEs trade internationally.

The main measures announced include refocusing Government bodies UK Trade and Investment and the Export

Credits Guarantee Department to provide better hands-on help to SMEs who are considering trading internationally, particularly in emerging markets such as China and India. Forum research shows many SMEs would like to explore overseas markets but are deterred from doing so by a lack of local knowledge, language barriers and difficulties in accessing reliable and affordable information.

The white paper also included a pledge to create a guaranteed loan scheme for exporters. Dubbed the export EFG, due to

its similarities to the existing Enterprise Finance Guarantee scheme, this should allow more SMEs to finance export orders. These measures will mean that the UK Government is a step closer to other European nations in terms of the support it gives to SME exporters, says FPB.

• The Processing & Packaging Machinery Association (www.ppma.co.uk) has its own office in China and can help its members to set up shop in the area as well as offering other useful advice about exporting. www.fpb.org

Robot sales smash predictions

BARA, the British Automation and Robot Association, reports that 2010 robot sales are up 65% on 2009 figures, reversing the declining trend in robot sales which has been seen in the UK year on year since 2005.

BARA's comparison survey made up of 40 robotics and automation companies shows that the increase in sales was much higher than industry pundits had initially predicted.

"Significantly, the survey shows that the automotive sector is declining, having taken 35% of sales in 2010 compared with 48% in 2006, whereas sales to late adopters of automation namely the food, pharmaceutical and aerospace industries are all up," says Mike Wilson, president of BARA.

One area of concern given that



Robot sales have increased higher than initially predicted

the growth sectors are mostly made up of larger companies, is that this survey may indicate that SMEs still have a lack of automation awareness. "So that SMEs can better understand the benefits of automation, BARA is

developing a series of regional events to provide manufacturers with information and know-how to overcome the obstacles," explains Wilson. They will begin in March. robots@hotmail.com

HSE has started inspecting hand-fed units

The Health & Safety Executive (HSE) has commenced on-site inspections of hand-fed platen (die cutting) machines in the UK and so users of this high-risk machinery need to ensure that their machines meet the required

safety standards. Following extensive consultation with industry, users and suppliers, the HSE has published an Information Sheet to help users manage this process.

The Information Sheet is aimed

at all employers, supervisors and managers who are responsible for the safe operation of hand-fed platen presses. The Information Sheet can be downloaded free of charge from HSE's website. www.hse.gov.uk/printing/alert.htm