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Newly established: Finnah Packtec

Optimised aseptic lines for established and new markets

Detail view of the aseptic form-fill-seal machine of Finnah Packtec that combines precision technology with high ease of use. (Foto: Finnah Packtec)

As of March 9th, 2018, Chinese Ningbo Lehui International Engineering Equipment Co., Ltd. took over NSM Packtec GmbH, Ahaus/Germany, from the former owner MAX Automation AG. At the same time the company changed its name to Finnah Packtec GmbH, in particular the first part of the new company's name is well known in the dairy, beverage and food industry and associated to aseptic filling and packaging machines as the company was founded under this name more than 40 years ago. The acquisition results in interesting synergy effects for both companies, as Ralf Buscher, who continues to serve as Managing Director of the company, and Lambert Deselaers, who continues to be Head of Sales/Technology, explain in an interview with IDM. At the same time they give an overview of most recent innovations and current projects.

IDM: Could you, please, introduce your new parent company to IDM's readership?

Ralf Buscher: The 1991 founded company Ningbo Lehui International Engineering Equipment has developed into the largest Chinese private company for complete systems and individual machine for the filling of beer and soft drinks. The company has been listed on the stock exchange since 2017 and currently has around 1,200 employees. Except for the Ningbo headquarters, there is a plant in Nanjing and a production facility in Ethiopia. Sales locations are maintained in North and South America.

IDM: What were the reasons for the acquisition?

Ralf Buscher: In addition to the core business, the Lehui-Group registers especially in Asia a tremendous growth potential concerning the milk and yogurt filling. So the company wants to invest specifically in this segment and develop further. The machines are to be built here in Ahaus and then sold on the Chinese or Asian market.

A second aspect is that the Chinese company, which, by the way, drew attention again as a regular exhibitor at last year's Drinktec with a large stand, has not yet had a European branch. Not least because of the proximity to the headquarters of two regular customers of Lehui – Heineken in Amsterdam and InBev in Leuven – we are an ideal location. In addition, Lehui wants to use Ahaus as a base to expand its European distributions channels from here. The previous NSM Packtec will benefit in turn of the new distribution opportunity and receive an excellent access to the Asian market. Of course, Finnah Packtec will continue to serve its established market and existing customer base from Ahaus.

IDM: So nothing will change in your current production program?

Lambert Deselaers: No, our manufacturing programme still includes form-fill-seal machines, which are standard built in four basic types. Depending on the cup size, film materials and

product to be filled, they reach a capacity of up to 216,000 cups per hour. On the other hand, four series of bottle filling and sealing machines are also offered. While three of them are designed exclusively for plastic containers, the fourth – and this is relatively new – is also suitable for processing glass bottles. The maximum hourly capacity of this series is 46,000 units. The third production area form aseptic cup fillers, of which three basic versions with a capacity of up to 58,000 units per hour are available.

All plants are designed as space-saving, modular linear machines. All of them are characterised by a complete, inline packaging material sterilization, validated in accordance with VDMA guidelines, using atomized hydrogen peroxide (H₂O₂) as the sterilizing agent in a hot air stream.

IDM: Which technical features of your lines would you like to highlight?

Lambert Deselaers: Recent innovations include, for example, the integration of a sleeve system into thermoforming machines. We are registering a lot of interest in the market and are currently testing a prototype. We have already several, even international inquiries about machines with this cup decoration variant

The advantages for the customers are primarily the extended advertising space and the greater brilliance in the appearance of the containers. As a result, the product appears to be of higher quality to the customer as a conventionally labelled or IML-decorated cup.

IDM: You mentioned it briefly: The extension of the bottle filling and sealing machines to the additional processing of glass containers is also relatively new.

Lambert Deselaers: Yes, we recently successfully implemented the glass bottle processing parallel to the PET bottle on one machine. However, the demand for such a combination plant is not as great as we now register with regard to the sleeve. The fields of application are rather limited, especially in case of beverages or milk products, which are filled in sterilized bottles, rotary machines are still the most present solution.

Ralf Buscher: However, it is pleasing that the interest in such universal machines is considerably greater in Asia than here in Europe. That is why we are confident that we will be able to create market advantages there with this extended offer – of course, also with the help of our new parent company

IDM: What projects are currently in progress – irrespective of potential jobs expected from the commitment of your new parent company?

Ralf Buscher: We recently delivered a form-fill-seal machine to a US yogurt producer, which is currently being installed and put into operation. It is already the second plant of this kind for this client overseas. A third is almost ready for acceptance here in Ahaus and will be installed in the United States later this year.



Ralf Buscher (left) CEO of Finnah Packtec GmbH, and **Lambert Deselaers**, Director Sales/Technology of company (Foto: Kimberly Wittlieb)

Lambert Deselaers: Incidentally, these machines are a prime example of how flexible we can respond to customer requests. There were several additional orders, which had to be considered at short notice. Among other things, a change from the originally planned in-mould banding to a sleeve unit was desired, and the cup size was changed again. The initially planned banding should be done by the way on conically shaped cups, for which we have also developed a special technique.

The interview was conducted by Bernd Neumann for IDM.



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