Managing Director Edgar Meeuwissen

The GEA SmartPacker form, fill and seal machine has demonstrated its extremely high reliability in food packaging applications. It is compact, user friendly, fast and able to create a wide variety of bag shapes – including pillow bags, quatro seal, block bottom, quatro box, envelope and zipper bags. Bergia Frites, an innovative producer of quality French fries and other natural potato products, recently installed two high speed GEA SmartPacker CX360 machines in its new production facility in Roermond (The Netherlands).

Bergia Frites is a family business that stretches back almost eighty years. It was founded by Managing Director Edgar Meeuwissen’s grandfather in 1931, who traded in potatoes, eggs and butter in the southern part of the Netherlands and over the border in Germany. By the mid-sixties, when the founder’s two sons took over, the company started adding value to potatoes by preparing and packaging French fries for the emerging snack bar market. In the early days, everything was done by hand, achieving an output of fifteen 10-kilogram boxes per hour. With an eight-day shelf life, and many cafeterias taking up to 60 boxes per week, the business grew.

FOCUS SHIFTS TO POTATOES AND AUTOMATION
By 1972, the company had stopped selling butter and eggs to focus exclusively on potato products. Edgar takes up the story, “We knew we had to start automating the process, and moved to a new location in Roermond. We added frozen French fries to the range in 1987 and bought our first vertical packaging machines in the early nineties.” Today’s product range includes standard fresh and frozen French fries for deep fat frying as well as products for cooking in a regular oven, microwave oven, combi-steam oven and grill. Although most of the output is for the professional market, some products are packaged for supermarket chains including private labels as Carrefour and Tesco. The company produces 10 to 12 tons per hour and exports all over the world.

RUGGEDNESS, STABILITY AND USER-FRIENDLINESS
Bergia Frites is currently moving to a new larger site, and the expansion plans called for two new vertical packaging machines to join the four existing machines. The company invited four manufacturers to show their latest continuous form, fill and seal packaging machines. After intensive investigation, the preference for GEA was made on the basis of ruggedness, flexibility, high capacity, user friendliness and Total Cost of Ownership. Edgar, who evaluated the machines together with his Head of Technical Services, selected the GEA SmartPacker CX360 after reference visits to other companies using this machine and demonstrations in the Technology Center at GEA in Weert (The Netherlands). Edgar continues, “I was impressed by the proven 99% uptime, making it the most reliable machine on the market. It is also very easy to operate. Our operators quickly learned to use them, and are able to optimize the machine’s performance”.

The print quality of this copy is not an accurate representation of the original.
PRODUCTION MUST BE READY!
In the French fries business, (freshly harvested) potatoes should be processed within five hours at a maximum after being loaded on the truck to preserve taste and quality. Processing takes around an hour. Edgar again, "A batch is usually shipped immediately after it’s processed, so production must be ready. If a packaging machine breaks down unexpectedly, my costs increase dramatically. The margins on this type of product are moderate, so I simply cannot afford unplanned stoppages. The GEA machines meet my reliability requirements with ease."

"I cannot afford unplanned stoppages. The GEA machines meet my reliability requirements with ease."

CAPACITY IS ALSO IMPORTANT
Another important performance parameter for Bergia Frites is capacity. Edgar expects to double the speed of packaging. "I plan to package this volume in half the time it previously took, and it looks like we are succeeding."

GEA SMARTPACKER CX
The GEA SmartPacker CX (with continuous film transport) is available for bag widths of 180, 250 and 360 mm. The CX360 model featured here can handle bag lengths of up to 550 mm and has a maximum speed of 120 bags per minute.

PERFORMANCE MONITORING SOFTWARE
The two GEA SmartPacker CX360 machines are installed in lines with high speed weighers and case packers. Bergia has also installed GEA TiroLabel labelers and the packaging machines have GEA CostFox software. This powerful tool identifies potential areas of improvement, so operators can optimize the way their machines run. It shows production figures, compares them with key performance indicators and identifies all process interruptions. "This will help our operators contribute to improvements by acting upon events that affect performance."

The print quality of this copy is not an accurate representation of the original.