



Sun Plastics invested in Rajoo's seven-layer co-extrusion blown film line in 2018 to replace imported barrier films in Botswana with locally-produced versions.

Sun Plastics reaps benefits of film line investment

SINCE Botswana-based Sun Plastics invested in Rajoo's Heptafoil seven-layer co-extrusion blown film line three years ago, it has replaced imported barrier films with locally-produced alternatives and experienced rapid growth by pursuing flexible packaging market opportunities.

'During 2018, we invested in new machinery and a 7 000m² BRC A-rated facility in Gaborone, which was built specifically for producing barrier and blown film products for the food industry,' comments MD Akash Patel. 'Our staff numbers have grown from 50 to over 200 to be able to meet customers' needs at a fast turnaround time.'

'With over 40 years' flexible packaging manufacturing experience within the region, we knew what we wanted and what our goals were when we planned this expansion,' explains Akash.

Teamwork makes the dream work

According to Jinesh Shah, VP at Rajoo Engineers, discussions around the project started about ten years ago when he proposed the idea to chairman Raj Patel. 'Raj and I started building a relationship after meeting at several tradeshows. When the time was right, I persuaded the Sun Plastics team to come to India for trials on the seven-layer line. The results provided management with the assurance that this investment would benefit the company,' he explains.

Akash adds the team was amazed at how quickly the Rajoo technicians worked to have everything installed and ready. 'It took less than two weeks to complete the installation and commissioning, and we haven't experienced any issues since then. The quality of service and support we receive from Rajoo make it stand out from competitors,' he asserts.

Regarding after-sales service, Jinesh notes that investments in effective communication platforms have boosted remote support levels. 'We've installed and commissioned numerous machines during Covid-19 lockdowns in various countries, through providing remote support and strong back-up from India.'

Standing tall

What makes the Heptafoil seven-layer blown film line stand out, according to Jinesh, is its flexibility to meet the majority of the industry's packaging development requirements. It can, for instance, produce symmetrical and asymmetrical films with minimum curling through the incorporation of a water bath for annealing. The line is available with advanced automation features such as integrated material conveying, gauge control, gravimetric blending and dosing, a non-contact type IBC system with digital correction, automatic thickness control (with non-contact capacitive sensor or gamma backscatter nuclear sensor), and a fully automatic centre-gap-surface winder suitable for different applications. In addition, an integrated touchscreen-based supervisory process control system enhances the operator-friendliness of the line.

'The Heptafoil's features conformed to our specifications and enabled a wide range of applications,' Akash remarks.

Answering market needs

Akash explains that the line has enabled Sun Plastics to provide the local market with barrier films, which previously had to be imported. 'We're proud that we can customise barrier properties according to customers' requirements and deliver these films in faster turnaround times due to the line's high output rate,' he comments.

Akash adds that another key factor is the ability to downgauge, an increasingly important sustainability driver. 'The benefits for customers is that we can produce films with a smaller micron, resulting in less weight and volume, at a more affordable price, while maintaining the same strength properties.'

When looking at future expansion plans, he reveals that the focus is on expanding the company's footprint in Botswana and in the sub-Saharan markets to which it exports. 'It's not about short-term growth but rather about investing in the company's future. With the right technology and machinery, as well as a good team, anything is possible,' Akash concludes.

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