

“The thermoforming industry is booming both in India and globally”

...opines **Sunil Jain**, President, Rajoo Engineers Ltd. In an exclusive conversation with **Avani Jain**, he talks about the growth of the thermoforming segment in the country. He further elaborates on the leading innovations making headway in the thermoforming machinery segment.

What is the current scenario of the thermoforming industry in India and globally?

With the revolution in organised retail and increased usage of disposable containers, the thermoforming industry is booming both in India and globally. The growth rates and the formats may vary from region to region, but the increased demand for sheet line and thermoforming machines augurs well for the growth in this industry.

What are the major demand drivers for the industry?

The major demand drivers are innovative packaging formats by the organised retail sector and the increased demand by the catering industry for more social and business functions. Further, with Double Income & No Kids (DINK) households and the habit of not cooking at home, increase in take-away foods will rise, thereby increasing the demand for thermoformed containers.

What are the peculiar demands of plastics processors for thermoforming machinery?

Plastics processors want machines to produce light and lower grammage products. They are becoming conscious about cost of production and energy costs, thus there is a pressure on machinery manufacturers to increase unit capacities and reduce power consumption. There is also a demand to automate downstream packaging so that labour cost is reduced.

What are the technological innovations making headway in the thermoforming machinery segment?

Machines that use lower energy, produce



less wastage, utilise less manpower and are able to process an increased quantum of recycled materials are in demand. Polyethylene Terephthalate (PET) bottle flakes to produce Recycled Polyethylene Terephthalate (rPET) sheets at affordable investment levels have been established as an ideal substitute for glass in packaging cold drinks and potable water instead of polypropylene and polystyrene. Sheet line and thermoformers for XPS foamed containers for the food take-away industry are also available indigenously from manufacturers like us in technical collaboration with Commodore Inc, USA.

What are the best practices that can be implemented by processors in order to optimise resources and enhance processes?

Wastage reduction and energy conservation are important aspects that need focus. It needs to be understood that this industry in our country is mostly owner managed, and thus there

is hesitation to adopt new and latest technologies or to upgrade to higher automation levels in machines, but one cannot run away from these realities. Obsolete machines and technology should be replaced with the objective of reducing costs.

How can the thermoforming industry beat the current slowdown?

Few action points need to be considered such as higher unit capacities to reduce energy costs and achieve higher economies of scale, machines with higher automation levels, reduced wastage and downgauging, in which no one can beat the Indian industry. The introduction of new packaging formats and new polymers should also be explored. Focus should also be on the usage of more appropriate materials such as rPET sheets produced from PET bottle flakes, which are available in abundance. The XPS foamed container is another packaging format that needs focus.

How do you envisage the future of the plastics thermoforming industry?

The future is bright, and we machinery manufacturers are extremely bullish. As mentioned earlier, all the demand drivers are favourable, and consumption is poised to increase exponentially. Processors need to enhance capacities to meet the challenges of the organised retail sector and to be more flexible in coming up with innovative packaging formats. Capacities need to be increased to be able to process PET bottle flakes into rPET and also produce XPS foamed products. ■

Email: avani.jain@network18publishing.com