

Forming a future-proof focal point

JINESH SHAH, Rajoo Engineers' deputy general manager of sales, answers PPM's questions about thermoformed packaging opportunities, technology and automation trends.



Q: Which product segments are providing thermoforming machinery suppliers and converters with the biggest growth in 2017?

A: Thermoformed packaging showing strongest growth includes drinking water, desserts, bakery products, cut fruits and vegetables, ready-to-eat food trays, and all types of disposable containers.

Q: What are the main challenges and opportunities in the South African market?

A: Because they're increasingly conscious of production costs and energy usage, plastics converters want to produce lighter weight, lower grammage thermoformed containers, reducing their polymer usage levels. This, in turn, is pressuring machinery manufacturers to increase unit capacities and reduce power consumption. There's also growing demand for automated downstream packing to reduce labour costs.

However, we're extremely bullish about the future of the plastics thermoforming market in South Africa. All the demand drivers are favourable and consumption is poised to increase exponentially. This means that converters will need to enhance capacities to meet the challenges of the organised retail trade and to produce XPS foamed products plus process PET bottle flakes into rPET. Products made from PS and PP can also

not be ruled out. In addition, they will feel the pressure in terms of flexibility in designing and producing innovative packaging formats.

Q: Which international technologies would you like to see implemented in South Africa?

A: Recycling technology for PET bottles to be converted into flakes for sheet extrusion with minimum energy consumption and high-clarity blemish-free sheet plus the versatility to use any kind of rPET flakes needs to be efficiently implemented.

Thermoforming for low-grammage products, deep-draw containers and multi-stage thermoformers for all types of recloseable containers also offer great potential. Additionally, consumer habits are fast changing to ready-to-eat foods, and thermoformed disposable containers are the only way to meet convenience needs and satisfy this growing trend.

Q: What automation and line integration improvements have you implemented recently?

A: We now offer automation in terms of stacking solutions for various containers at affordable price levels. Though this is not a new technology globally, the cost-effectiveness is making it increasingly viable for converters to opt for automated stacking solutions.

A fresh approach for Packaging World



IN AUGUST, Keith Coleman (pictured left) joins the Packaging World team as fresh produce technical head, charged with the implementation of a progressive strategy to reinforce the company's position as a leader supplier of flexible packaging to the fresh food sector.

Although Keith will be based in Cape Town – where the company has a warehousing and distribution point – he will commute nationally and internationally to drive this fresh foods packaging focus.

Comments Packaging World MD, Dean Gianni: 'We're on an exciting growth journey. Investments in staffing, capital equipment and a new factory in Pinetown (KZN), being rolled out this month, positions our business as a serious, focused and swift-footed athlete in a challenging environment.'

Adds Keith: 'I like the Packaging World team's energy, "can do" attitude and commitment to being absolutely customer-focused. As an inclusive, forward-moving, and (if I may be as bold as to say) disruptive unit that's driven to push the envelope, they are my kind of people.'

