

Turkish innovation

Ispak Ambalaj is riding the wave of flexible packaging innovations from its native Turkey to the major European and US markets. General manager Eser Erginoglu tells the story of a manufacturer on the rise.

As consumers enjoy a higher quality of life, they come to expect more from their flexible packaging. Europe and the US have already reaped many benefits from the push for packaging to be more hygienic, more sustainable, more efficient and with a better shelf life. Now, demand for those up-to-the-minute packaging solutions is soaring in other regions of the world, and a new generation of flexible packaging manufacturers is on its way up.

“The changing lifestyles of people in Asia, the Middle East and Africa are really boosting the flexible packaging market,” says Eser Erginoglu, general manager of Ispak Ambalaj. The Turkish-based company, part of the Kibar Holding Group and founded in 1974, specialises in customised flexible packaging for food, beverage, pharmaceutical, industrial and tobacco applications. Turnover had been steady at €30 million annually, but three years ago, Erginoglu was brought in to capitalise on the booming Turkish packaging market. She came up with a strategic investment plan to bring turnover to €150 million and break into Europe’s top 20 packaging converters by 2020. Since then, Ispak’s workforce has more than doubled.

Coffee breakthrough

Capsule espresso machines have taken Europe and the US by storm in the past few years. But while the Turkish market may have been ready for the capsule revolution, the industry was not. Turkish coffee is different to Italian espresso or US drip-filter coffee: instead of filtering, the grounds are slowly brought to the boil, partially poured, boiled again and poured a final time, resulting in a very distinctive taste. Ispak’s 12-person research and development department worked closely with machine manufacturers Arçelik to develop a custom coffee capsule cover for the Turkish market.

“This is a local product with a new machine and that needed R&D, not only from the Ispak side, but also from the machine supplier’s side,” says Erginoglu. “It’s a two-way project and it took one year to really get the flavour of the Turkish coffee right.”

Ispak picked up a WorldStar Packaging Award at Interpack 2017 for the foil coffee capsule cover it created. According to the WorldStar Packaging Organisation, “the top foil is manufactured using a special technology that enables its barrier feature and adhesion performance to protect the encapsulating taste.” Six months after market launch, sales of machines and capsules are high, and the capsule cover has also been shortlisted for the UK Luxury Packaging Awards.

Meeting international demand

Ispak has its sights set on the European and US food packaging markets, and the point of its multimillion euro investment push is to adapt the company to the needs of international customers.



New capacity: Ispak’s €70-million smart factory is open for business with European and US brand-owners.

“When you go to a developed country like those in Europe or the US, the focus of the customers is different: they want a more hygienic environment, a more sustainable production, more oxygen barriers and a better shelf life of the products,” says Erginoglu.

Ispak now uses a solvent-recovery plant to boost the environmental sustainability of its operations, as well as bring down the costs of storing and recycling solvents. The company’s next move is a €4-million high-bay warehouse, currently under construction and supplied by a German firm. Essentially unmanned, it will use industry 4.0 technology, including laser-guided vehicles, to make production more efficient than ever.

“4.0 is much more than automation,” Erginoglu says. “4.0 is the mind set of building the automation with production efficiency: less labour and more machines that communicate with each other through this new tool in the market. I don’t think that any other flexible packaging supplier in the world is using this technology to improve the productivity of the plant.”

More streamlined production combined with solvent recovery will see Ispak’s costs lowered significantly in preparation for its push into the European market. Over the next year, Ispak plans to move closer to its clientele with three new offices: September will see the opening of a Dusseldorf office, while two more offices are set to open in France and the UK in 2018. They will also aim to reduce delivery times from the local warehouses.

“Turkey is a net exporter of flexible packaging, our capacity is more than what we consume, so flexible packaging producers in Turkey are gaining export markets and we are gaining market share every year in Europe,” says Erginoglu. ■

Further information

Ispak Ambalaj
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