

# CONFECTIONERY

## PRODUCTION

chocolate, sweets, snacks & bakery

MARCH 2024

### Exclusive ProSweets & ISM review

## Inside

**Bakery processing**  
**Aeration and enrobing**  
**Flexible packaging focus**



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# Contents

## CONFECTIONERY PRODUCTION

chocolate, sweets, snacks & bakery

MARCH 2024

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## REGULARS

- 5 Editor's Comment
- 6 News
- 12 A day in the life
- 58 Diary / Twitter

## FEATURES

### 14 SPECIAL FOCUS

A major technology breakthrough from Swiss firm Triknö has been exhibited at the ProSweets event, with its tempered nozzle technology (TNT) claiming a global first in delivering 'just-in-time' chocolate tempering, as Neill Barston discovers speaking to its CEO, Marc Fuchs.

### 19 ISM & PROSWEETS REVIEW

This year's ProSweets and ISM trade fairs in Cologne offered up some key highlights, as editor Neill Barston discovers reporting on the two major shows.

### 26 BAKERY PROCESSING

Discover how cutting-edge technology and automated equipment is reshaping bakery production, improving efficiency and meeting evolving consumer demands and market challenges. Daisy Phillipson reports.

### 32 FLEXIBLE PACKAGING

Advances in delivering flexible packaging machinery are continuing to make a major difference, as editor Neill Barston discusses, exploring the key releases of several key businesses.

### 40 AERATION AND ENROBING

Confectionery Production explores the latest enrobing and aeration equipment and tools allowing manufacturers to maintain productivity and efficiency in the ever-changing chocolate sector. Daisy Phillipson reports.

### 45 FUDGE, TOFFEE AND CARAMEL

While it may well be an age old market segment, fudge, toffee and caramels are not short on new innovations, as Neill Barston finds

## CLASSIFIED

- 50 The Manufacturers' Directory
- 51 Equipment for Sale
- 52 The Suppliers' Directory







# PAYING MORE FOR A SUSTAINABLE COCOA

How to address the unequal distribution of value across the cocoa sector

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The main theme of the conference "Paying More for Sustainable Cocoa" will be the backbone of the agenda with presentations and discussions around a wide range of topics such as living income, a more sustainable supply chain, market development, supply and demand, environmental sustainability, productivity, high quality cocoa, commodity exchange, empowering women in cocoa, etc...

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## 3 - DAY PROGRAM, 13 PANELS, 2 SIDE EVENTS, EXHIBITION & GALA DINNER

SUNDAY 21/04 • OPENING REGISTRATIONS & EXHIBITION / SIDE EVENTS / WELCOME DRINKS

MONDAY 22/04 • PLENARY SESSION / Panel 1: *The quest for the living income of smallholder farmers: why are we stuck and how can we fix it?* followed by a session dedicated to the EU Sustainable Cocoa Initiative

TUESDAY 23/04 • BREAKOUT SESSIONS & GALA DINNER

### TRACK 1: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

- Panel 2: Farmer income and social responsibility in cocoa farming
- Panel 3: The true cost of cocoa
- Panel 4: Strengthening global partnerships
- Panel 5: The role of women in cocoa

### TRACK 2: MARKET DEVELOPMENT

- Panel 6: Prospects for the Asian cocoa markets
- Panel 7: Sensorial and nutraceutical quality attributes
- Panel 8: Sanitary and phytosanitary measures
- Panel 9: Cocoa by-products

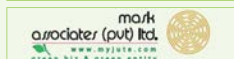
### TRACK 3: GOVERNANCE, MANAGEMENT AND THE FUNCTIONING OF MARKETS

- Panel 10: Cocoa policies and regulations
- Panel 11: Supply Management
- Panel 12: Commodity Exchange
- Panel 13: Farmer representativeness

WEDNESDAY 24/04 • PLENARY SESSION: WRAP-UP / WCC5 BRUSSELS DECLARATION / CLOSING

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# Major events deliver hope for growth in 2024

**F**or this month's edition, one of our core areas of focus will be reflecting on the pivotal ISM and ProSweets events in Cologne, Germany, that offered up plenty of innovations across the full spectrum of our combined industries.

As the organising team behind the event acknowledged, there had been a strong level of feedback to suggest the shows needed to be back in their traditional timeslots at the end of January.

The fact they had slipped into April of last year was largely circumstantial, owing to significant factors of an energy crisis and supply chain challenges that had impacted significantly on many manufacturers.

While many of these tests sadly still exist, most notably the inflated costs of core ingredients such as cocoa and sugar (see our news pages this month), from speaking to a number of companies, there was a sense that 2024 may well prove to be a more settled year.

There will of course be no room for complacency with whatever segment of industry businesses are in, especially given that many global economies remain unsettled due to ongoing conflicts including in Ukraine and Gaza, resulting in consumer caution in many areas of the world.

However, in spite of all these concerning background factors, as anyone attending this year's ProSweets and ISM would have witnessed, there still appears to be a notable pipeline of demand for confectionery, ingredients and the manufacturing systems that shape our sector.

Among the most striking innovations was Triknos's 'just-in-time' tempering system, appearing in prototype form during the show in Cologne, which you can exclusively read more about in these pages.

Our features this month clearly underline this point, including our focus on flexible packaging, exploring some of the latest machinery to be unveiled for the market.

We also examine recent trends in bakery processing, which itself has continued to soar as a segment globally, with demand remaining high in many areas, which has helped drive technological advances.

Moreover, on the finished product side, we catch up with businesses within the fudge, toffee and caramel market, which appears to be thriving despite a shift towards shoppers favouring potentially healthier options with their snacking and treats.

Completing our edition, we offer a further exclusive, interviewing Heather K. Terry, on her work establishing the GoodSAM Foods snacking brand, and its impressive ethical sourcing model, which sets a high bar for the broader industry in its innovative practices. Here's hoping you enjoy this wide-ranging issue.

Neill

**Neill Barston, Editor,**  
*Confectionery Production magazine*

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# Pez keeps ahead of the game with latest innovation



Visitors to this year's ISM were keen to test the technology behind the Pez MyHead in Cologne. Pic: Neill Barston

Inventive avatars ensured Austrian company PEZ emerged among the top three innovations at this year's ISM, using 3D printing technology delivering personalised versions of its classic dispensers, reports Neill Barston.

*Confectionery Production* reported live from the show, with the company's latest innovation claimed third place in the ISM new product awards, with global visitors to the event keen to get their hands on its latest novelty.

The Pez MyHead app works through taking a photo in its specially created app, or uploading an existing picture, which then generates an avatar from the image. From there, the user can then configure preferences by choosing from a range of hairstyles, selecting their hair colour and picking a suitable torso. As the company explained, once the order has been placed, the dispenser is made using a 3D printer with the help of an experienced 3D printing specialist. The dispensers are

produced on state-of-the-art machines, and the results are truly impressive.

Finally, the dispensers are packaged in a smart slipcase. This presentation box makes it clear that Pez sees the product as a high-quality gift or treat for yourself.

"With Pez MyHead, we're offering a fantastic new product for anyone who loves innovative ideas," says Hans Bangelmeier, managing director of PEZ. "Until now, only famous faces from films, comics and games got the chance to feature on a PEZ dispenser. Now, anyone can. That makes an extremely personal, highly original gift for someone you care about."

There is a premium version for those who have a very distinctive profile or whose hairstyle is not in the list of options. This means a 3D artist reworks the data for the figure before the dispenser is produced to match the photo even more closely.

## Planet A Foods gains ISM recognition

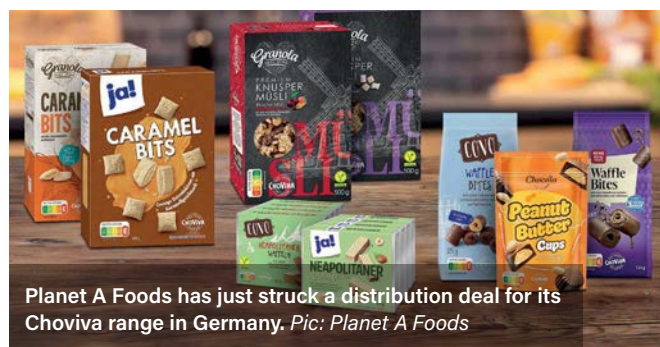
First place at the ISM new product awards for 2024 was awarded to Germany's Planet A Foods for its Choviva, cocoa alternative, which we have previously reported on, and has subsequently attracted strong international interest.

As the independent judges in the contest noted, the top three companies claiming honours were commended for their creativity, and willingness to play with ingredients, textures and flavours to create some genuine innovations.

Notably, as judges asserted, the taste is comparable with conventional chocolate, yet it has a much better CO<sub>2</sub> footprint. Second place went to UPPA Cacaofruit Bites by Gudrun Commercial NV from Belgium.

Collecting the award, Dr Sara Marquart, of Planet A, said: "We're a start-up and are honoured to be here. We started out two and a half years ago, It was just my brother Max and I in our kitchen, dreaming of making sustainable chocolate, and here we are in the industry."

"It would be unthinkable without the industry, we are so thankful for all our partners who have been so patient with us, even before we gained RSPO certification. So, here's offering thanks to the industry and the ISM, for the amazing organisation and for having us."



Planet A Foods has just struck a distribution deal for its Choviva range in Germany. Pic: Planet A Foods





# Hershey's key results sales boost

The Hershey Company has released its fourth quarter and full-year results for 2023, revealing net sales of \$11.16 billion, up by 7.2%, as the company acknowledged fast-rising global cocoa prices would impact growth rates, writes Neill Barston.

Pressures on the markets in terms of higher core ingredients costs, which include a significant upward shift in sugar prices, and ongoing supply chain issues globally, were reflected in the US-headquartered firm's performance in the final segment of the year. Net income for the business in 2023 stood at \$1.86 billion at the end of December last year, up from \$1.6 billion at the close of the previous year.

Its fourth quarter results showed a 0.2% sales increase to \$2.65 billion, with operating profits decreasing by \$464 million (11.8% year-on-year).

Furthermore, the company said it was implementing efforts to increase agility, enhance automation, and support a more efficient operating model. As it noted, these initiatives are expected to generate supply chain, manufacturing, and operating expense savings of \$300 million by 2026, of which \$100 million is expected to be realised in 2024.

## Company performance

For North America, its fourth-quarter sales were \$2.2 billion, up 2.2% year-on-year, with its mint and gum markets performing

well, increasing 3.6%, delivering a regional income of \$724 million, up 3% year-on-year, driven by net sales growth and gross margin expansion.

The salty snacks division, including popcorn, noted a 24% decrease in sales to \$205 million for Q4, following reduced advertising and merchandising, as consumers turned to healthier snacking options.

Meanwhile, in the fourth quarter internationally, Hershey's sales increased 12.7% year-on-year, to \$231 million. The volume improvement reflects double-digit growth in Latin America, World Travel Retail, and Europe, and high-single-digit growth in India.

"We continue to operate in a dynamic environment, but we are encouraged by the resilience of seasonal traditions and the consumer response to innovation within our categories," said Michele Buck, The Hershey Company president and chief executive officer.

"While historic cocoa prices are expected to limit earnings growth this year, we believe our strong marketing plans, innovation and brand investments will drive top-line growth and meet consumers' evolving needs."

The company may have endured some challenges within its markets amid global economic tests, but its results have shown an underlying resilience. It will be returning to showcase its latest ranges at the 2025 edition of Sweets & Snacks.

## Swiss documentary sees Lindt face child labour claims

Lindt & Sprüngli has come under the microscope in the wake of a recent Swiss documentary that has alleged child labour has been found in its supply chains within West Africa.

The show, which aired on the SRF channel, focused on Tepa, western Ghana, where it is claimed there were instances of children working on cocoa plantations.

According to the company's recent sustainability report, it has worked with around 80,000 farmers within the country, and as previously covered, has set out to deliver a clear policy of

delivering confectionery in an ethically sourced manner.

The business is recently said to have outsourced its farming contracting in the region to Swiss raw materials group, ECOM.

As the Swiss television show noted, Lindt had introduced measures to prevent child labour in its supply chains, and its own figures are reported to have revealed that of 8,491 surprise visits to farms, 87 child workers were found, though the documentary asserts that the monitoring is insufficient to ensure that the full picture is highlighted.



## Lakrids marks major milestone with B Corp Status

Danish liquorice specialist Lakrids by Bülow has celebrated gaining coveted B Corp status, which has highlighted its ongoing commitment to sustainable manufacturing within its operations, reports Neill Barston.

The international environmental standard, which is widely considered as a gold standard across industries for corporate social responsibility policies, which has now seen a number of companies with confectionery engage with the initiative, including Luker Chocolate, Valrhona, Love Cocoa, Koa cacao fruit business and Moo Free Chocolates.

Under the certification scheme, companies make a firm commitment to verifiable environmental performance standards, as well as placing accountability and transparency at the heart of their everyday operations.

As Lakrids, which is continuing its mission to 'make the world love liquorice,' noted that since 2020, 100% of the power consumption for factory outside Copenhagen where all the company's products are crafted, is covered by power from



Lakrids by Bülow founder Johan Bülow has seen the company grow into a B Corp. Pic: Lakrids

Danish windmills, and in 2019, the business is believed to have become the first confectionery company in the world to switch to 100% recycled and recyclable (R-PET) plastic jar packaging.

Launched in 2021, the fully organic slow crafted collection presented in recycled glass jars and 2022 refill bags further minimise packaging consumption, reinforcing the brand's positive impact beyond profits.

Founded in 2007 and built on the mantra "less but better," founder Johan Bülow pioneered a new category of gourmet liquorice within the premium confectionery landscape.

CEO Fredrik Nilsson said: "Attaining B Corp certification is a momentous occasion for us. It reaffirms our commitment to making responsible business choices and contributing to the wellbeing of the planet and people, while spreading our love for liquorice."

"B Corp certification serves as a testament to a company's commitment to meeting the highest social and environmental standards, and our company has successfully demonstrated its dedication to create a positive impact in all aspects of its business."



## Läderach sets the perfect Valentine's mood

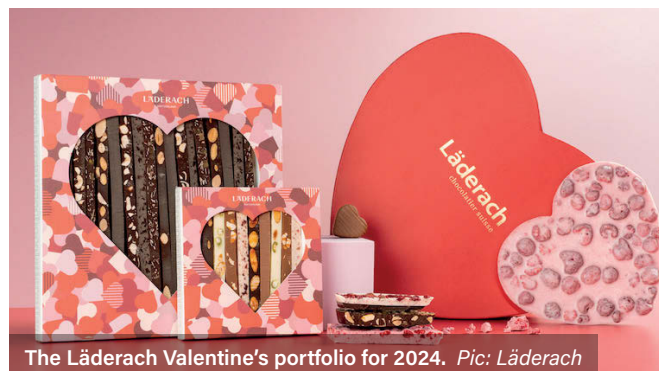
Swiss premium confectionery brand, Läderach unveiled a wide array of special edition chocolate treats celebrating this year's key Valentine's season.

From heart-shaped gift boxes featuring red ribbons and FrischSchoggi (fresh chocolate) hearts in six flavours to pink teddies made from creamy white chocolate and brand new dark chocolate sticks boxes to add to its existing ranges.

The company's chocolates are now available at 140 stores across 15 countries, including the US and UK, where the company arrived in 2019, including a major store on Regent Street, boutique on Chelsea's Kings Road, an atelier in Covent Garden, as well as outlets at Westfield Shepherd's Bush and an outlet in Harrods' Chocolate Hall.

As the business explained to *Confectionery Production*, its flagship hand crafted lines have offered a distinctive unique selling point, and are best enjoyed within a few weeks of being

purchased, with consumers consistently revealing in industry studies that despite cost-of-living constraints, they are willing to pay extra for occasional indulgent treats.



The Läderach Valentine's portfolio for 2024. Pic: Läderach



# Nestlé to take away the Breakaway

Fans of the classic British Breakaway chocolate bar have taken to social media to vent their dismay at the demise of the old-school favourite, as Nestlé confirmed that it would no longer be produced from next month, reports Neill Barston.

The brand, which was first made by Rowntree MacKintosh in 1970, featured in a number of memorable TV adverts through its early years, had been a popular family favourite for decades, but declining sales have prompted a decision on its future. In addition, the Yorkie Biscuit bar is also set to be dispensed with by the company.



But shoppers voiced their concern on X (formerly Twitter): "Just heard the sad news Breakaways are being discontinued. Another taken too soon," said one social media user, while Iceland Foods chimed into the discussion with the following note: Break ups are hard... but saying bye to #Breakaway is going to be even harder."

The concern from consumers did not end there, with a #BringBackTheBreakaway emerging, and UK design agency, Designstroke (main image) even creating its own ad campaign in support of ensuring that the beloved brand is revived.

According to Nestlé, which took on the brand in 1988, the move was to make way for investment and innovation across the FMCG company's wider portfolio. It follows the recent decision to discontinue the much-favoured Caramac bar.

A spokesperson said: "We know fans will be disappointed to see it go, but it's time for us to say goodbye to Breakaway. We have seen a decline in its sales over the past few years, and unfortunately, we had to make the difficult decision to discontinue it.

"While we know it's sad to see Yorkie Biscuit go, we want to assure shoppers that we have plenty of exciting new products lined up for 2024. Watch this space."

While there may have been two fondly regarded outgoings from the within the confectionery group, the business said it is set to launch a new biscuit in the form of new variety of Blue Riband, which will be available as in a Hazelnut edition which is being released this month."



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### Ofi's Amsterdam investment

Olam Food Ingredients (ofi) has formed a partnership with supply chain business Commodity Centre Group ("CCG"), to develop an advanced cocoa bean warehouse terminal exclusively using green energy at the Port of Amsterdam in the Netherlands. According to the companies, the joint venture involved around 7,000 solar panels at its new facility, which could potentially lead to the reduction of 1,350 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> per year – equivalent to 67,500 trees absorbing carbon from the atmosphere.

### Malaysian palm oil verdict

Industry observers have welcomed a UK government verdict that has offered a report confirming that Malaysia is operating mandatory deforestation-free standards (MSPO) in its palm oil operations, which are used for sectors including the confectionery market.

Significantly, Britain's Trade and Agriculture Commission (TAC) – also recommends to the UK Government that MSPO, and the Malaysian Palm Oil Board (Licensing) Regulations 2005, should be accepted as proven compliance tools for the UK's Due Diligence regulations, established in the UK Environment Act.

### Sweet result for Cargill

A joint venture between Cargill and dsm-firmenich, Avansya, has confirmed that its EverSweet stevia-based sweetener has gained a positive response from the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), and UK Food Standards Agency (FSA). The company has continued to drive innovation within the segment. As the business noted, the Eversweet line has been designed to bring together components of the stevia leaf – steviol glycosides Reb M and Reb D.

## Trends set to shape 2024



Carol Oldbury, managing director of Hames Chocolates.  
Pic: Hames Chocolates

Indulgence, sharing and enhanced flavour options are all set to form some of the latest confectionery market trends for 2024, according to insights from UK business Hames Chocolates, writes Neill Barston.

As reported from this year's ISM event last month, there has been no shortage of new and extended product ranges set for release across global markets in the year ahead, with a number of strong product releases right across categories, from gums and jellies, through to premium pralines and snacks lines.

Notably, as Carol Oldbury, managing director of Hames Chocolates explains, (see our previous exclusive video interview here), there are some positives on the horizon this year, as the company's own research has indicated.

"While it's hard to predict what 2024 has in store for the wider food and drink industry, one thing we can be sure of, is that the popularity of chocolate, will not diminish," noted the director of her hopes for this year's markets.

She added: "As an expert in private label confectionery, we have seen an increasing number of shoppers turning to private / own label brands recently, not only due to it being good value, but also due to the quality, innovation, and choice.

"Therefore, confidence in the balance of price and quality they provide is at an all-time high – with 41% of shoppers buying more private labels than before the pandemic and a further 77% planning to keep buying them in the future. This shift means many retailers are increasingly re-evaluating the value of private label items over their branded competitors, which represents a significant opportunity for manufacturers that can provide confectionery private label."

Furthermore, she revealed a number of consumer trends will impact the market – including a continued interest in indulgent treats. In the UK, this market was worth £13.3bn last year, highlighting a significant sales opportunity for confectioners.

One particular category of interest is in white chocolate, and is considered as a good base for delicate flavours, such as lemon. In response, the company will launch a new range in response later this year.

On ingredients, the business said that the trend towards delivering genuine sustainability credentials is seen as a vital element by shoppers, who are far more savvy than ever in respect of environmental performance.

In terms of flavours, Hames added that consumers are becoming increasingly adventurous, which led it to expand its own series of hot chocolate to more unusual options including Mince Pie and Milk Chocolate with Irish Cream flavouring.



# Multi-million investment for Alland & Robert's acacia gum site

Major manufacturing investments from French-based ingredients firm Alland & Robert totalling €11 million, have seen a fourth production line open at its Normandy facilities that are anticipated to significantly enhance its operations, writes Neill Barston.

The company, which has facilities at Saint-Aubin sur Gaillon, has projected a 50% increase in its capacities to product the company's core lines, which have focused on acacia gum, which is widely used within confectionery as a sweetener.

As the business explained to *Confectionery Production*, its core production site, which was initially opened in 2007, has been notably expanded, bringing 30 new jobs, includes a new drying tower and adjacent workshop have been added to the two existing towers.

This has reportedly doubled the production facility from 8,000m<sup>2</sup> to 16,000m<sup>2</sup>.

According to the business, the latest manufacturing line will have the capacity to process almost 30,000 metric tons of acacia gum per year, up from 20,000, which will enable the company to keep pace with the sharp rise in global demand.

At the local level there will be a real impact in terms of

employment, with over 30 jobs being created by the new production line. Major investments to meet rising demand for acacia gum. The creation of this new production line confirms the desire of Charles Alland, who succeeded his father as head of the company last March, to pursue Alland & Robert's growth and business diversification, alongside investments aiming to achieve the company's carbon emissions reduction goals.

In effect, acacia gum holds significant potential for development in various industries where there is an underlying preference for natural and plant-based products.

The scale of this investment reflects its ongoing success, with the company pursuing its development in various international markets and now exporting natural gums to over 70 countries. Indeed, the growing market for acacia gum – an ingredient that is natural, vegan and healthy – aligns with modern consumer expectations.

As the company added, the key investments are aligned with the goals of its CSR plan, as well as its sustainable development goals. It has committed to reducing its greenhouse gas emissions by 20% per kilo of gum manufactured (scopes 1, 2 and 3) by 2025.



The Alland family at the company's French headquarters. Pic: Alland & Robert

## BDSI calls for EU packaging law review

Germany's BDSI confectionery trade group has expressed 'extreme concern' at EU legislative plans for packaging design that could negatively impact seasonal product lines such as heart-shaped chocolate boxes.

As the industry organisation noted, the sweets and snacks sector remains renowned for creative flourishes with Valentine's Day ranges, Easter bunnies or festive Santa Claus with items such as scarves, hats or bows – which may be considered unacceptable under proposed European laws.

The confectionery sector in Germany has been hit notably hard in the past year, with energy prices and ingredient inflation hitting the industry particularly hard, as with many other markets across the continent and around the world.

According to the BDSI, the draft of the Packaging & Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR) indicates focus should be on minimising packaging in the future. However, unlike the EU Parliament, the European Council's position does not provide for any exceptions for seasonal products or gift packaging, which have been valued and in high demand by consumers for many decades.

# Tech-based solutions for a cocoa crisis

**Godfred Arhinful, a budding agricultural roboticist in Ghana offers a view on how robotics can help solve a crisis in West African cocoa production**

The chocolate treat that has mesmerised people's taste buds worldwide, is facing an uncertain future. Though the craving for this pleasure shows no signs of abating, the supply of cocoa beans — its essential ingredient — is on a troubling decline.

A previous study by the International Cocoa Organisation (ICCO) projected that the global cocoa supply will fall short of demand by one million tons annually by 2050, posing a significant threat to the industry. This represents a ten per cent decrease in global cocoa production.

Ghana and Ivory Coast, the world's leading cocoa producers responsible for two-thirds of cocoa output, are at the forefront of this impending crisis. They face multifaceted challenges that can potentially disrupt the very core of the cocoa industry.

One such challenge is Black Pod Disease, caused by the *Phytophthora palmivora* fungus, a major threat to cocoa plantations. It has been known to wipe out entire cocoa farms, resulting in devastating losses for farmers.

Dr. Owusu Domfeh, head of the plant pathology division at the Cocoa Research Institute of Ghana (CRIG), noted: "Blackpod disease poses as one of West Africa's threats to cocoa production and can lead to losses as high as 80%."

Adding to these challenges is a shortage of labour that both countries are grappling with. Cocoa farming is a demanding process that requires a lot of work, from planting to harvesting.

However, many young individuals seek opportunities in other fields, enticed by the promise of higher wages and better working conditions. This shift away from cocoa farms has made it difficult for the industry to maintain production levels.

Both countries have responded with plans – Ghana has its "National Cocoa Development Plan," an ambitious initiative aiming to double cocoa production by



Godfred Arhinful

2025. The plan includes: Providing farmers with high-yielding cocoa seedlings, offering farmer training, and establishing programmes for rehabilitating cocoa farms.

Meanwhile Ivory Coast has focused on promoting sustainable farming practices through its "National Cocoa Sustainability Strategy," based on agroforestry, which involves planting trees alongside cocoa trees for shade and improved soil fertility. Additionally, it has implemented a certification programme to ensure cocoa is produced responsibly. Overall, more must be done to counteract the looming cocoa shortage.

## Innovations to Address Challenges

Innovations are essential to combat the disease and address the labour shortage. The emergence of laser robots for detecting and eliminating black pod disease fungi holds great potential.

These robots could also take on labour tasks such as tree pruning, cocoa pod harvesting, bean cracking, and drying, ultimately making cocoa farming more appealing to young people.

Prof. Enoch Adjei Osekre, an expert in Crop and Soil Sciences from the Faculty of Agriculture at Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), highlights the transformative potential of this technological breakthrough:

"The utilisation of laser robots has the

potential to transform cocoa production by easing labour shortages while increasing productivity." They could also enhance the quality of cocoa beans, resulting in improved chocolate.

However, careful consideration must be given to potential challenges associated with introducing laser robots, such as job displacement and the high cost of implementation.

Reskilling programs, financial assistance for small-scale farmers, and community engagement are crucial to ensuring a smooth transition to a technologically enhanced cocoa industry.

Together, Ghana, Ivory Coast, and the international cocoa industry can navigate these challenges to ensure a sustainable future for chocolate production.



African cocoa farming faces major ongoing tests.  
Pic: Shutterstock

While laser robots hold promise, ongoing sustainable farming practices, research on cocoa plant diseases, and global collaborations are equally vital. Additionally, incorporating data would ensure that the information remains current, given the dynamic nature of the cocoa industry.

The fate of chocolate hangs in the balance – the world's love for this treat is undeniable, and Ghana and Ivory Coast play a crucial role in meeting this demand. Their ability to overcome challenges will determine whether chocolate remains a staple in our diets or becomes an expensive luxury item. ♦



# Cocoa prices continue to soar, causing major industry concern



Farming operations, including those in Asia (pictured), and West Africa are seeing a major uplift in prices due to global deficits. Pic: Shutterstock

Cocoa prices have reportedly risen to their highest recorded level on the New York stock exchange since the 1970s, standing at \$5,874 a tonne (£4,655), yesterday, causing notable industry concern, writes Neill Barston.

As major manufacturers, including Hershey, Mondelez and Lindt have noted, the cost of the major ingredient has doubled within the space of a year, as the industry remains hit by a shortage of supplies following two years of weather-impacted crops from tropical El Nino conditions.

Farmers in core cocoa supplying countries of Ghana and Ivory Coast have also been affected by significantly higher prices for fertilisers, which were prohibitively expensive for many agricultural workers last year. This in turn has hit crop yields, as well as the issue of crop diseases also affecting the quality of harvests for key communities in the industry.

In terms of crop deficits, the International Cocoa Organisation has estimated last year that the global cocoa stock shortfall is around 99,000 tonnes, against an overall annual production volume of around five million tonnes delivered last year, according to Statista research group.

Another financial factor that has been highlighted to Confectionery Production, is that stock exchange results that have reported record highs do not typically account for inflation, so the present high of \$5,874 compared against the last historic price peak of cocoa seen in 1977, at \$5,700, is, in real terms in 2024, worth around \$28,000 today.

## Pressure on retail prices

Consumers have already felt the economic strain of confectionery price rises within the past year, with the Which report, among others, reporting a 50% increase in its chocolate

confectionery ranges in the run-up to Christmas, and the latest surge in prices seen this week are believed to have had an impact on the Valentine's gifting market.

As for major chocolate companies, Hershey has just released its latest financial figures, which show that while the company made sales gains in 2023, its figures fell for the final quarter.

Notably, as we recently reported, in the UK, Karen Betts, chief executive of the Food and Drink Federation recently warned that ingredients price rises, including those for cocoa, were a particular concern for the sector, which is grappling with the fallout of higher energy prices over the past two years, as the cost of living crisis continues to impact.

Speaking to *Confectionery Production*, Adrian Ling, CEO of Plamil Foods, explained that the surge in prices over the past two years had meant that the company had been forced to put up its prices to customers, along with many others within the sector.

He said: "The current situation is highly volatile with numerous factors involved, culminating in increased prices of the cocoa bean and onward cocoa ingredients used to manufacture chocolate. On LinkedIn, I nearly bet I'd eat my hat with regard to speculating how fast the prices were rising this week... thank God I didn't, the next day it reached that level.

"Towards the end of 2023, with an easing of general inflationary pressures, ingredient buyers of chocolate were tending to hope that the forecast in chocolate prices were short term. At that time, we were encouraging customers to contract long into 2024, with even then, what seemed to be challenging pricing. Those that went short in the hope of a soon to happen easing are seeing a considerable firming of pricing wholly due to the current cocoa situation."



# Forging a global chocolate first

A major technology breakthrough from Swiss firm Trikno has been exhibited at the ProSweets event, with its tempered nozzle technology (TNT) claiming a global first in delivering 'just-in-time' chocolate tempering, as Neill Barston discovers speaking to its CEO, Marc Fuchs

**T**here's a genuine sense of excitement as an audience gathers around the Trikno stand at ProSweets, as it boldly displays what it believes is a genuine world first piece of technology.

The company's recently installed CEO, Marc Fuchs, enthusiastically starts up the prototype tempered nozzle technology (TNT for short) machinery, which promises plenty of potential for the global chocolate processing market.

Its star feature comes in the form of what the Swiss firm's leader explains as 'just-in-time' tempering, which occurs directly on the print head as it supplies the moulds.

As he notes this is the real game-changer in its view, and it certainly appears to pique the interest of the many visitors hovering

around the stand, eager to gain a glimpse of the company's fresh innovation. It's on an ambitious mission to carry forward the well-established Knobel brand of machinery, which unfortunately fell into administration in the summer of 2022 amid challenging external conditions as the world struggled to draw clear of a highly-testing pandemic.

However, as the Trikno team explains, acquiring the business in the autumn of that year, including keeping on dozens of its staff, the much-respected company continues to gain a fresh purpose under new ownership.

For many external observers, it appears there's plenty of interest in the fact that Knobel's well-regarded name lives on in the entrepreneurial hands of a business that

recognises Swiss quality.

The new enterprise's sense of vision is certainly ambitious, with its mission statement asserting 'it's not enough that the world associates Switzerland with high quality confectionery – we have the ambition on an international level that Trikno becomes synonymous with the most efficient and innovative ways of making products,' explains the business, as it lays out its corporate vision.

## TNT's potential

According to the company's CEO, its latest TNT innovation is indeed catching the eye of potential investors, on a number of levels, against a backdrop of continued buoyancy in machinery sales, despite wider supply chain challenges in the market.





The TriKno stand at ProSweets attracted a wide range of visitors to see its latest tempering system. Pic: Neill Barston

As the firm explains, its solution is based upon a scalable and temperable 3D print head, featuring a specially devised extruder unit, targeting ultra-fine machine decorations and labelling of products with maximum repeat accuracy.

Notably, this key new unit makes it possible to create three-dimensional structures with chocolate tempered directly in the nozzles, comparable to a 3D printer. The number of extruder nozzles can be adjusted as required, allowing a high degree of flexibility and adaptability to a wide range of production requirements.

Furthermore, its just-in-time tempering ensures precise control of the chocolate consistency and enables unprecedented fineness and detail in the decoration. By continuously dispensing tempered chocolate with uniform pressure, extremely fine, repeatable lines and dots can now be created by machine.

This innovative solution supports the

realisation of creative chocolate ideas that were previously difficult to implement by machine.

In addition, direct tempering of the extruder nozzle unit in the 3D print head leads to immediate and distortion-free control over the temperature of the chocolate and can therefore increase the quality of the decorations.

According to the company, the processing of chocolate in this manner also effectively reduces the energy required for tempering, which is a key consideration for its sustainability credentials.

Speaking to *Confectionery Production* at ProSweets, CEO Marc Fuchs, explains there had been a positive response at the show for its breakthrough innovation, stating that the 'sky is open' in terms of its potential for both smaller artisan and larger scale confectionery manufacturing operations.

He says: "This is our proof of concept, and our next step is to develop a prototype machine, and define the number of print heads for it, and bring the machine to a customer application, collect feedback and then optimise it from there. We're here to find a customer who is willing to go to the next step with us.

"We're showing the TNT to demonstrate that the chocolate is properly tempered, and have been making a lot

**"I am just proud to show to the industry that we are back supporting companies again and the feedback we've had has been fantastic."**

Mike Nevines, PTL

of measurements, and have done a lot of lab trials to show that things like its positioning and speed are good. Our mission is to collaborate with customers and develop together. We've already had some enquiries about TNT here at ProSweets, so I think we'll be busy, which is great," enthuses Fuchs. He explains one of the most dynamic features of its new line is in its sheer flexibility, and the potential energy saving capabilities are among its standout core strengths.

### Strong industry background

As he notes, having come from a background working for major equipment and solutions businesses including many years with Bühler, notably at the company's impressive Swiss headquarters in Uzwil, he reveals that taking on a new role leading TriKno forward offers an especially energising challenge. Moreover, as he adds, the company, which ▶



Marc Fuchs, CEO of TriKno, (right of pic), with chief sales officer Bart Klinkenberg, showcasing the new TNT line. Pic: Neill Barston. Pic: Rotten





This year's ProSweets saw more than 250 exhibitors from around the world. Pic: Koelnmesse

is located in Felben-Wellhausen, employs 60 people within Switzerland, had already made significant investments into the TNT system's initial research and development.

Displaying a commendable level of belief in the project, he feels it is likely to have a notable impact in the market, though his team is by no means being complacent in its approach.

As its CEO observes, the company is aiming to have its first fully operational new tempering machine out with a customer later this year.

"Luckily, I had some time to look into the business beforehand, so I officially started in October last year, so it's been four months in the role. I saw the potential of these beautiful high-tech machines, and when I spoke to customers, I saw the sparks in their eyes, they knew exactly how great they are and what they bring to their production and their business.

"I am just proud to show to the industry that we are back supporting companies again and the feedback we've had has been fantastic," explains the Swiss national, who says there's a depth of expertise within its ranks which will make difference.

Reflecting further on the TNT's development, he notes that there are a number of strings to its bow, and he will be keen to explore commercial opportunities in the coming months and years ahead.

Which is precisely why, he says, being seen at shows such as ProSweets

is particularly important as it attempts to establish a foothold in what is an undoubtedly competitive international machinery market.

"We came up with the tempering technology as we believe we are the market leader when it comes to decoration, from tiny dots, through to precise different colours and high production.

"However, our existing technology previously had limitations when it came to ultra-fine lines and dots, so we needed to take that technology to the next level, and worked on the extrusion as well as tempering processes. So it's an all-one solution, which is why we call it the temperance nozzle technology."

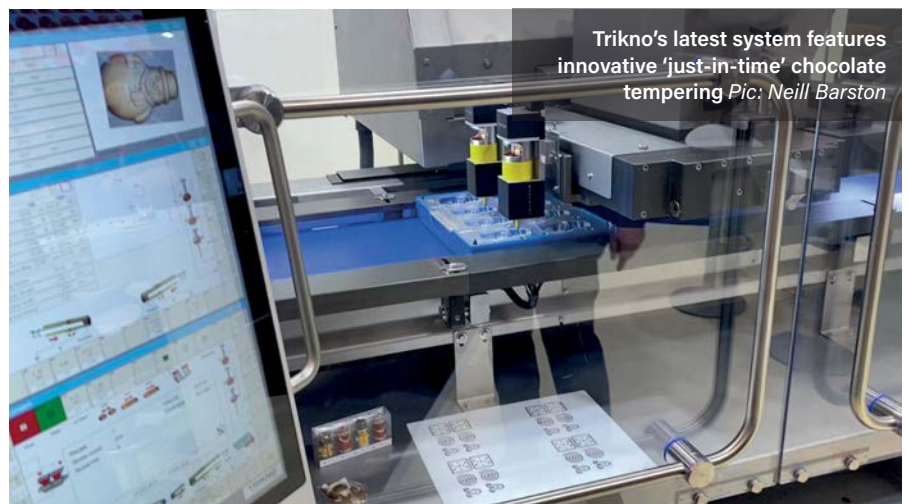
Turning his attention to its other areas

of focus, he explains that the business is also continuing competencies in one-shot depositing, as well as cold press technology for hollow figures, plus other fresh chocolate processing systems.

In addition, he also enthuses that the business has developed systems for processing inclusions at a rate of up to 45 per cent of the quantity of a product, representing a considerable improvement on previous achievements.

### Decisive show

For his part, Bart Klinkenberg, chief sales officer for Trikno, adds that ProSweets is proving a rewarding experience. While he notes the volumes of visitors may not be quite what they were pre-pandemic, the







The moulding systems for the TNT prototype displayed at ProSweets.

Pic: Neill Barston

chance to meet a wide range of potential customers is of significant importance.

He says: "It's been positive here. The good thing is that we have been presenting something new, and really unique in the market. So, we have presented ourselves as an innovative company, rather than one that follows others," he notes, conceding that while it was a relatively late decision to exhibit its TNT system at the show, it is worthwhile in doing so.

He adds: "The 'just-in-time' tempering of the machine is a good thing, and also energy consumption-wise it has another positive. We have made it a lot easier for operators to handle, as you don't need to have someone operating it who understands all the aspects of depositing and tempering for them to be able to use it,"

says the chief sales officer, who asserts this is set to prove a decisive factor in terms of delivering precise automated equipment. He notes that it offers advanced in its performance, yet is comparatively manageable to put in place and run within a manufacturing facility.

As for the company's CEO, he concludes that he is buoyed by the prospect of driving forward the business, and he's fully welcoming the tests ahead.

Thankfully, its TNT system clearly delivers an innovation focal point and confidence boost, amid the wider industry faces some ongoing challenges in terms of wider market uncertainties.

"The past year or two for the business has been about talking to customers and explaining our situation, and building

trust with them. So, this year, we have to bring in the orders, we've put a lot of work into it all, and it's time to harvest now.

"We are very positive and optimistic that we will really be back at the level that customers used to know the business in the good times," explains the CEO, who says that the business is continuing to export globally.

"The exhibition overall was a success for us. We had a lot of good discussions and feedback around our TNT technology and we had the chance to talk to existing, but also a lot of potential new customers. So, I am very happy about the outcome and I am looking forward to the next year show to present our newest developments." ♦

**Trikno has also developed capabilities for cold pressing chocolate lines.**

Pic: Trikno



The business has gained a strong speciality in chocolate decorations.

Pic: Trikno



## Trikno factfile

- The Swiss-based business employs 60 people, exports equipment around the world
- It was established in 2022, after acquiring fellow Swiss Firm, Knobel, which had decades of market experience
- The company is led by CEO Marc Fuchs, a senior sector executive with over two decades of industry experience
- Trikno has claimed a global first with its TNT 'just-in-time' tempering system
- The company's latest machinery line was showcased at ProSweets, and aims to be with customers in the near future



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This year's ProSweets featured nearly 250 exhibitors. Pic: Koelnmesse

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# Home sweet Cologne

This year's ProSweets and ISM events in Cologne offered up some key highlights, as editor Neill Barston discovers reporting on the two major shows

**R**eturning to their traditional end of January positioning proved a welcome move for this year's much-anticipated ISM and ProSweets shows in Cologne.

*Confectionery Production* was on hand to report live on proceedings during these two major shows, and it was clear that they were very much back on track, after 2023's compact shortened trade fairs.

While the events may not have quite had the numbers compared to those achieved pre-pandemic ((ISM managing 30,000 visitors from 140 countries and ProSweets over 13,000) from speaking to a wide range of businesses, it was very much the case that there was a sense of industry resilience despite wider supply chain and inflation issues that have impacted on the sector, as much as anywhere else.

With just under 250 exhibitors taking part this year, there was a real buzz around Hall 10.1, as show visitors from around the globe clamoured to gain insights into the latest equipment developments.

**“ProSweets 2024 in Cologne offered an unmatched platform for engaging deeply and meaningfully”**

Soren Bettex, Kruger & Salecker

From some interesting milestones, such as ACMA automated solutions group marking its centenary at the show, as well as prominent displays from a wide range of other machinery manufacturers in the wake of major Interpack releases last year.

As for themes, delivering on corporate sustainability goals once again was high on the agenda in terms of equipment and systems showcased during the event.

This was encouraging to witness, given that the environmental challenges facing the world only appear to be accelerating at an alarming rate, which was reflected in a notable eco packaging focus zone.

Among novel solutions presented were birch bark product containers, as well as potential for natural loofah packaging to replace conventional foam.

Across the show, were also many fine confectionery marvels from around the world that were making waves with visitors from around the globe.

Speaking to *Confectionery Production*, ISM's show director Sabine Schommer said: “This year's ISM in Cologne was a ▶



great opportunity for the international confectionery and snack industry to showcase itself. With 1,427 companies from 74 countries – 12 per cent more exhibitors than last year – presenting the latest trends and new products, the event was a resounding success. With over 30,000 trade visitors – a 20 per cent increase from 2023 – traveling from more than 140 countries to Cologne to participate in this unique event.

“The exhibiting companies praised the high quality of the trade visitors in particular. Thanks to an extended event programme, exhibitors and visitors were able to experience the full diversity of the industry and benefit from additional networking opportunities.”

For his part, Gerald Böse, president and CEO at the event venue, Koelnmesse, felt that there were plenty of positives across the four days of the event.

He noted that a key return for machinery businesses was particularly welcome in returning it to near its former peak.

“The Sweet Week together with ISM particularly had a positive effect on the economic activities and also helped strengthen the industry. The presence of renowned, international packaging and production machine manufacturers at ProSweets Cologne underlines the importance they play for the sweets and snacks industry. Moreover, the close interlinking of the two trade fairs led to a higher number of machine sales this year,” explained the CEO.

### Exhibitor numbers return

This year’s dynamic range of exhibitors included a number of businesses within the ingredients sector, including Capol, confectionery coating and glazing specialists.

Thomas Mücklich, the company’s head of business development, explained that ProSweets remained a special show for attracting a strong mix of local visitors from Germany, as well as from across Europe and far further afield.

He said: “The show has gone quite well for us, and we have had many visitors to our



stand who have got in touch.

“Whether that’s seeing old or new customers, we really appreciate being here in Cologne again. It feels like it’s a second home after many years of being at the show. Our Vivapigments have been performing quite well, especially the Titanium Dioxide replacement, which has been something that has been very much requested from the



market. Our other colours are also doing well, including the white variant, for which we have had an amazing response. We have found customers are looking at using this to help with reducing their production costs, which is a main aim for many people now,” noted the specialist.

For its part, Netherlands business, GNT, also reported encouraging interest in its core colouring foods lines, which are finding a strong niche, as consumers continue to seek out natural solutions.

Fleur van Sleuwen, marketing communication specialist, GNT Group, commented: “ProSweets 2024 was a really good event with representatives from many of the biggest confectionery brands in attendance. We took the opportunity to showcase the possibilities with our plant-based Exberry colours in confectionery applications and “beyond.”

“We were handing out ice cream with confectionery toppings so visitors could see the potential of our colours for themselves. Because we create our colours from fruit, vegetables, and plants, people are often surprised to see just how vibrant our shades can be.

“We also gave visitors a chance to choose their own ice cream colours and toppings and they really enjoyed it, and we had our confectionery experts from all over Europe on the stand,” she added, noting that the event was especially useful for discussing shared challenges with industry counterparts.

### Technical breakthrough

On the machinery front, Dresden’s Theegarten-Pactec, drew notable interest in its lines, including the company’s FPC5 chocolate confectionery packaging line. This has just attained a key technical breakthrough in being able to process a

The GNT team showcased its colouring foods Exberry line.  
Pic: GNT





broad range of sustainable materials for its operation.

It also demonstrated its FPH5, which is reportedly capable of packaging gum at a notably rapid speed of 4,000 products/min. Commenting to *Confectionery Production*, company president and CEO, Markus Rustler said: “Theegarten-Pactec travelled to Cologne with great optimism. We were hoping to build on ProSweets from the pre-Covid era. Unfortunately, looking back, we must admit that we were unable to achieve this goal in 2024. Although we were very pleased about the visitors to our booth, overall, there were too few. Sunday and Wednesday in particular were relatively quiet in terms of visitor numbers.

“In principle, however, we still consider



**Theegarten's Markus Rustler explains that ProSweets remains significant, but could have been busier.**

ProSweets as a trade fair parallel to ISM to be a useful opportunity to meet our customers in the years between Interpack in Düsseldorf. However, the customers therefore must make the journey to Cologne.”

Meanwhile, Lyn Pitt, MD of DT&G Ltd confectionery coating machinery systems, which co-located with Rinsch equipment, explained that after working together on several projects, the chance to feature alongside the German-based company was an excellent opportunity. “It's been a really good show, and it has been great to be sharing a stand with Rinsch, which always has a good atmosphere, they are so hospitable, and I think some people just come for that reason alone. It's nice to be part of it,” explained the MD. She added: “The reason why I love this industry, there's a lot of understanding



**Lyn Pitt of DT&G Ltd, and Carolin Banzer, of Rinsch at ProSweets.**  
Pic: Neill Barston

about of how products are sourced, how important cocoa farmers are – that's really good to see that being reflected in the pride of where they get their cocoa from. Also, the innovation in the actual products themselves is very exciting. We have had customers meet us here from New York, New Zealand and Japan, and many others who have worked with us in the past have called in to see us, and it has been very successful.”

### Italian flair and engineering precision

For Andrea Boggio, CEO of Sacmi Packaging and Chocolate machinery, revealed to *Confectionery Production* that this year's event had been especially productive.

Among the company's latest innovations will be its newly designed chocolate processing HFI 509 refiner. It has been designed to ensure optimal grinding and ultra-fine particle size, even on products of different, less traditional consistency.

The CEO believed it had been an especially successful show. He enthused: “For our areas of focus in our meetings we talked about sustainability, and particularly about sustainable packaging materials, as well as our packaging and wrapping machines. “We have already been able to make our equipment work with sustainable materials for some time, so it is about combining that with the performance of our machinery, as well as helping preserve products to help with their shelf life. “In addition, a lot of customers have talked to us about energy consumption, and are increasingly focused on energy saving.”

for sustainable production. We have a lot of leads and some deals at the show, so ProSweets was very profitable for us, and this year has started well for us,” he explained, noting that its forecasts for the coming year ahead were looking particularly positive for the business.

As Italy's IMA explained, its machines can be stand-alone or fully integrated into complete lines, and enjoyed a strong presence at this year's show in Cologne. Flexible and customised to respond to specific requirements, its technologies are built to handle gums, candies, coated sweets, chocolate and bars.

Its extensive range includes tableting to coating; filling and capping to flow wrapping; cartoning, tray packing are among the company's core portfolio of equipment competencies. ▶



**Andrea Boggio, CEO of Sacmi Packaging and Chocolate machinery says the outlook for 2024 is strong.**  
Pic: Neill Barston



Italy's IMA offered a full spectrum of machinery for the sector. Pic: Neill Barston

The business offered a comprehensive range of machines for overwrapping, stretch and shrink wrapping, forming, loading and closing, case packing, robotic handling and palletising. Visitors were shown the new IMA Gima DWM600 high-speed wrapping machine, processing stick packs that contain gum pellets, mints and pressed candies, wrapped and packed on edge.

Fabio Tozzi, sales manager, commented: "This event is always a good opportunity. The fact Prosweets and ISM exhibitions are jointly organised at the same time helps the connections between the confectionery producers and the suppliers of packaging solutions, such as IMA.

"As a group, we were present with our technologies related to wrapping and packaging solutions for gum (slabs, sticks, cubes, pellets), candies (chewy, soft, hard), coated sweets (dragées, sugar coated products) and chocolate, as well as secondary packaging and end of line solutions. Our strength as a group is the possibility to offer complete turnkey solutions and to be a key player for the confectionery producers in the development of sustainable ideas. The response we had from the exhibition was very interesting, being able to connect directly both with procurement engineers and producers and to see that overall, sustainability is the key word for the future.

## Robotics enhanced packaging

Furthermore, on the packaging machinery front, Gerhard Schubert was made a welcome return to the event, highlighting its recently unveiled TLM comfort feeder, which responds to a need in addressing processing delays arriving if a line's blank magazine runs empty – as machine operators then have to act quickly to avoid unnecessary stops.

Its other demonstrations included pick

and place robots in the pickerline to flow wrappers and case packers, plus complete packaging lines.

For snacks as well as confectionery manufacturers, the company additionally showcased an innovative feeding system for conveyors.

The flexible "HERBIE" driverless transport system has been devised to take on a range of tasks in the production or logistics process. Another highlight was delivered with the company's Partbox, offering a rapid 3D printed spare parts system, which, as previously reported, has already been

talked to them about the Partbox, which saves on process time in terms of ordering parts, which they have really liked. The sweets industry is very important to Schubert, and we have seen a lot of people who have our machines already."

## Processing innovation

For its part, Syntegon's major areas of focus for the show included its fully automated oiling drum Makat BC96.

This has several central features and recipe management for a lower process variability. Via a human machine interface (HMI) operators can set individual target values for the different production parameters and save them in a product recipe to call up the data as required. This way, gummy and jelly manufacturers can achieve more reliable processes, which not only lead to a higher product quality, but also to a higher OEE.

Gerd-Volker Preidt, of the business spoke on the its latest oiling drum line. He said: "We have shown the oiling drum line to quite a few people at the show and they have been impressed with it. They perhaps have other downstream equipment, but



Schubert's highly-automated lines were among the stars of this year's event. Pic: Neill Barston

making inroads into the sector.

Conrad Zanzinger, CTO of Schubert Additive solutions believed the event had gone well for the business.

"We have seen a lot of customers and

don't yet have such a machine, which they will find advantageous," adding that the HMI systems was decidedly useful in terms of delivering production monitoring efficiencies.





UK equipment firm BCH reported a successful show in Cologne

“The gummy market is coming along step by step, and whereas the US was particularly big a couple of years ago, we are now seeing it coming up in Asia, so it comes in different waves,” added the machinery specialist, who added that being at ProSweets was of significant importance for the business to engage with its customers.

There was further innovation from Australian-headquartered tna, which displayed its advanced roflo HM 3 horizontal conveying system for the confectionery distribution process.

As its team noted, the line has been described as “the ultimate conveying system,” it formed a key part of the firm’s offering as part of its dedication towards providing complete solutions for the market.

During this year’s show, the company held discussions on major market drivers, focusing on sustainability, waste reduction and the potential for energy savings. There was also an emphasis on the importance of

enhancing flexibility and efficiency through innovation in technology and digitalisation.

Its portfolio now includes everything from kitchen operations, starch conditioning, mogul tray handling, de-moulding, product cleaning and finishing to depositing, distribution, packaging, and case packing. In addition, the company’s full ongoing service and support offerings were highlighted, as well as its ambitious investment plans to further expand capabilities in the sector.

### Five-roller refiner launch

Moreover, Dr Tobias Lohmüller, chief technology officer for Germany’s HDM, revealed that there had been a notable period of development within the business over the past five years. This has included delivering innovations for both the chocolate and cocoa market in terms of machinery, including its latest five-roll refiner, which has been devised with a notable emphasis on operational safety and overall performance. It reportedly delivers up to 25–35 per cent higher throughput with up to 30 per cent less energy consumption per metric ton (compared to standard 1800mm refiners), plus the same compact footprint of a standard 1800mm refiners.

“We were not originally planning to be here this year because of Interpack last year, but we have our new five roll refiner that needs to be launched, as there has been a lot of investment into it.

“We have developed this latest line so that it allows the highest throughput, as well as allowing customer to make the adjustments to processing that they want.

“For us, innovation is inseparably linked to the added value for our customers. Our focus is on optimising yield, increasing

## ISM & PROSWEETS REVIEW

throughput, and monitoring product quality to precisely enhance the performance of our machinery and systems in real time. By achieving these objectives, we create genuine value for our customers, reflected in increased revenue and consequently, sustainable success.”

Among prominent UK equipment businesses at this year’s show, Lancashire’s BCH attracted interest in its latest extrusion technology for the confectionery sector. As operations manager Stuart Grogan explained, the return to Germany had proved extremely worthwhile in meeting



Germany’s HDM unveiled a new five-roll refiner for the 2024 edition of ProSweets. Pic: Neill Barston

its wide range of international customers. He said: “We were pleased to once again participate in the Prosweets exhibition. Showcasing our latest generation TS180 Extruder was a resounding success and we received some excellent feedback from visitors (old and new) where we are able to demonstrate its industry leading qualities. “Wednesday was a particularly successful day for us as we secured a number of key contracts and are now looking forward to delivering these projects and building new relationships overseas.

“For us, moving the two shows back to the original date format allowed us to participate again and also receive the level ▶



Syntegon’s innovations were under the microscope at this year’s ProSweets. Pic: Neill Barston



of interest we had planned for. This was evident in our post show review and also the feedback we received from our visitors.”

### Digital challenges

For its part, Germany’s WDS, which has been devoted to a large portfolio of chocolate processing lines, also enjoyed an enthusiastic response from visitors for the 2024 event.

As the business noted to *Confectionery Production*, its offering carried on momentum from last year’s Interpack.

“Our discussions with customers and visitors showed that the enthusiasm for high-precision, hygienic depositing technology remains a particularly unique selling point”, summarises technical manager Carsten Butz. “This was a chance for us to provide information to numerous national and international customers about our solutions and to help solidify and even conclude concrete business deals.”

The company presented depositor systems for all pourable and tearable masses at ProSweets, reflecting the diversity of its plants. Another highlight was the EasyClean design.

The WDS division sweetOTC has established itself as a specialist in technologies for the production of active OTC sweets, supplements and nutraceuticals. Specially for this sensitive field, the company exhibited a hygienic



The TNA team enjoyed successful ProSweets 2024

depositor system made of 100 per cent stainless steel. There were showcases for complete customised solutions in designs qualified according to applicable GMP regulations.

These solutions cover the entire value chain, from concepts to the development of individual confectionery products and adapted production processes.

As it added, in response to the challenges of digitalisation, the company is a founding member of the SweetConnect network, designed to share online data between industry businesses, ensuring greater efficiency and production sustainability.

Fellow German business Kruger & Salecker enjoyed a prominent showing in Cologne, offering key demonstrations of its machinery lines. CEO Soren Bettex, felt the event had been fully worthwhile.

He enthused: “ProSweets 2024 in Cologne offered an unmatched platform for engaging deeply and meaningfully, even with a smaller audience than seen in pre-pandemic years.

“It was a privilege to not only strengthen ties with our existing customers and strategic partners but also to connect with potential future customers, fostering new opportunities for growth. My pride in my team’s performance cannot be overstated; their dedication and professionalism truly made a difference, reflecting our collective commitment to excellence,” explained the CEO of what proved a memorable and dynamic showcase that was embraced back in its traditional annual position.

With plenty of genuine innovations on show, it is scheduled to return once again in February 2025. ♦



Chocolate and confectionery processing systems from WDS were among key highlights for this year's event. Pic: WDS







# The tech revolution in bakery processing

Discover how cutting-edge technology and automated equipment is reshaping bakery production, improving efficiency and meeting evolving consumer demands and market challenges. **Daisy Phillipson reports**

**A**ccording to a recent survey of 1,250 consumers across Europe by ingredients group Tate & Lyle, while traditional health considerations like sugar and calorie content remain important in bakery products, 67 per cent ranked additional nutritional benefits as a priority, and two-thirds are likely to choose bakery products with added fibre claims, presenting an opportunity for manufacturers and their customers to attract and retain shoppers.

Lin Peterse, Tate & Lyle's category development manager for Bakery in Europe, explains: "In addition to claims like reduced fat and reduced calories, consumers in Europe are increasingly seeking products that are high in fibre or high in protein. As a result, protein

bars or high fibre snacks, which used to be considered 'performance' products, are becoming more mainstream, and consumers are also starting to look for fibre and protein claims on products like cakes and biscuits."

In addition to the impact of high fat, salt and sugar display regulations in the UK, the report also explores the impact of other regulatory changes like Nutri-Score in certain European countries on buying habits. Rather than creating entirely new product ranges, 65 per cent of the respondents said they would like manufacturers to reformulate the recipes of their favourite bakery products so they can still have the convenience of buying them at aisle ends or by checkouts.

The challenge for manufacturers is

how best to reformulate recipes while maintaining quality and profitability. As Roger Gaemperle, head of industry strategy and marketing CPG and LS EMEA at Rockwell Automation, notes: "Bakery manufacturers face a variety of challenges, from fluctuating energy and raw material costs to increasing the effectiveness of their supply chain while complying with increasing food safety regulations and meeting sustainability goals."

Alongside fluctuating energy costs, Gaemperle observes how bakery processing lines can often have equipment or devices that use a lot of energy such as ovens and mixers, and there are growing health concerns and increasing demand for more organic and gluten-free bakery products. Due to shorter shelf life and



Technology deployed within bakery processing has increased notably within recent years, as automated systems dominate. Pic: Shutterstock



risk of contamination, he says many manufacturers are shifting from fresh to frozen products. “These challenges require an end-to-end solution for bakery automation, from the factory floor through to the consumer.”

## Technology in action

Highlighting the various technologies available to bakery manufacturers to overcome these challenges, Gaemperle specifies the benefits of augmented reality (AR) and digital twins as crucial tools for manufacturing organisations seeking to enhance operational efficiency, boost productivity, and improve the overall employee experience.

Emulate3D digital twin software from Rockwell Automation, for instance,



Smart, software based management of bakery lines production schedules has considerable potential. Pic: Rockwell Automation

develops cost-effective software products that enable the user to shorten development cycles by leveraging their CAD to create dynamic simulation and emulation models faster. This allows the operator to test models, analyse throughput and identify bottlenecks in production before it occurs.

Rockwell Automation’s PlantPax modern distributed control system (DCS) can provide machine and line-level performance monitoring through Production Intelligence solutions. For the enterprise, PlantPax provides a CPG suite that allows for order workflow across the entire plant and streamlines operations from raw ingredients to finished goods. It also tracks production and consumptions and determines yield throughout the process.

“Skids and full plant-wide DCS should look and feel the same. Simultaneously, you have the flexibility to select the specific features essential for your application and customise the system according to your requirements,” adds Gaemperle. “Additionally, the PLCs and engineering software remain consistent, whether applied to individual skids or an extensive plant wide DCS encompassing diverse applications such as robotics, notion, building management and process within a unified platform.”

Proving an example of this technology in action is Country Maid – a manufacturer of seasonal and speciality bakery items. The firm wanted to increase production and efficiency without having to expand its facility. Country Maid implemented a digital transformation solution that included Rockwell Automation’s PlantPax, FactoryTalk Batch and FactoryTalk Historian, allowing it to keep the same mixers and add a second line without adding any additional labour. This has been estimated to increase line feed by 14 per cent, doubling the company’s output.

## Support from start to finish

Even small to medium-sized bakery manufacturers can reap the benefits of smart technology by finding the right solutions provider with the expertise and tools required. “If a small to medium bakery would like to start the digital journey a common data structure is key, which can be created via PlantPax,” comments Gaemperle. However, it’s not always easy knowing where to start, which is why Rockwell Automation encourages customers to interact with its consulting firm Kalypso to design a strategic roadmap.

When it comes to creating healthier bakery products, a case that demonstrates ►



Camilo Wolff, of snacks start-up Selectum works with Bühler to deliver his latest product ranges. Pic: Bühler

**“Bakery manufacturers face a variety of challenges, from fluctuating energy and raw material costs to increasing the effectiveness of their supply chain,”**

Roger Gaemperle,  
Rockwell Automation

the importance of finding the right solutions provider is that of start-up snack company Selectum. In 2019, CEO Camilo Wolff - who formerly worked for Haas Group, which was acquired by Bühler Group in 2017 - wanted to develop a snack that was gluten-free, palm oil-free, not fried, with 40 per cent less fat than chips and nachos, and with a high protein content.

“To develop this product, I approached Bühler, as I knew they have the expertise and a technical laboratory for product development trials,” Wolff explains. Together, they developed Paddies, small crunchy wafer pillows with a creamy filling that match the better-for-you criteria. Through his work with Haas and later Bühler, Wolff knew the food technologists

at the Wafer Innovation Centre at Leobendorf would have the expertise required to create Paddies.

The centre is fully equipped with all the necessary solutions to carry out tests and trials, and for nearly a year, Bühler experts conducted hundreds of recipe trials and tasting sessions to develop the batter and the cream. This included various high-protein flours for the base, while the first Paddies had a cheese cream filling.

Additionally, Wolff wanted to produce the product sustainably. Bühler offered the Franz Haas EWB inductive oven, which is 100% powered by electrical energy. Emanuel Hoeckner, product manager at Bühler, says: “The electricity-powered oven removes all Scope I emissions from burning the gas in the baking step, which makes the entire process much more sustainable.”

Today, Paddies come in three flavours - cheese, toffee and peanut butter - all of which have more protein and fibre, are not fried, and therefore have less fat. “Because we were using gluten-free flours and a protein cream that is not completely standard, it was necessary to make several modifications in the production line,” concludes Wolff. “Bühler supported us all the way.”

### Sustainable upgrades

Sustainability is still top of the agenda in 2024, especially in bakery processing where certain equipment can use a lot of energy. In the production of biscuits and cookies, processing equipment firm Baker Perkins notes that the oven is a major user of energy, and Industry 4.0 can be used to help minimise costs.



Technicians from Bühler, examined recipes for the Selectum's new snack line, Paddies. Pic: Bühler



Baker Perkins' machine centre-lining system, part of its Industry 4.0 capability, plays a significant role in maintaining correct operating parameters by comparing them with previous settings for a similar product. Meanwhile, the company's TruBake HiCirc oven uses a high-rate direct convection heating system, which combines low energy consumption with high product quality and throughput. Precision control of temperature and airflow above and below the band is said to

supplier, we focus on these challenges by designing fully automatic machines with low gas consumption."

Bartels notes that one operator can manage several of the company's machines at the same time, which reduces personnel costs. "Furthermore, during the last few years, our R&D and design department put considerable effort in the development of sustainable solutions. Looking at the gas heating only, Walter has developed an upgrade for the heating system and an easy

tools like OEE, operators can reduce waste and optimise the use of resources, while also controlling the gas and compressed air consumption by being continuously informed and able to act when required.

Sustainability is also a major initiative at bakery equipment specialist Reading Bakery Systems (RBS), with one of its key goals being to reduce harmful emissions and conserve energy. "We have tested and implemented these solutions to see the results. While hydrogen is a clean energy as an end user solution, electric oven power is likely to be the best long-term solution," comments Cameron Johnston, senior director, product and process Innovation, RBS.



Richard Hill, of Baker Perkins, spoke on how the company is enhancing efficiency of its systems, including for confectionery, at our World Confectionery Conference

create a stable and predictable environment that minimises fuel consumption.

Another way to manage energy costs is to examine alternative heating methods such as electricity and hydrogen, and Baker Perkins can adapt ovens to use these options for future sustainability and security.

To reap the benefits of data acquisition, handling and transmission, the firm's policy is to provide all machines 'Industry 4.0 Ready' to a level that allows interconnection with other systems via the Internet. The key unit is an eWON Flexy Gateway, a modular router and data gateway allowing linkage to remote devices. This allows Baker Perkins to dial into customers' control systems anywhere in the world when they call for remote support, as well as remotely commission and start-up new unit machines.

For its part, wafer equipment specialist Walterwerk Kiel has been focusing on sustainability and other demands through machinery development. "We see the challenges for our customers in the rising energy costs, the shortage of staff and the carbon footprint of their production," explains Markus Bartels, general manager, Walterwerk Kiel. "As their machine

optional retrofit that both help to reduce the gas consumption noticeably."

Walter has noticed an uptick in demand from manufacturers for alternative energy sources. In response, the company developed its electrically heated oven Elektra. "Once the supplies with green power pick up, the Walter customers will be able to change to electricity for their fleet of baking equipment," adds Bartels. "We put a lot of effort in our electrically heated Elektra oven. The Walter baking plate and oven design allows the application of the advantageous induction heating with a reduction in energy consumption of minimum 20 per cent in comparison to gas heating."

Demonstrating how digitalisation and sustainability work in tandem, the Walter service app reduces travelling of its service technicians by enabling remote servicing. Another important digital feature of the firm's machines is process monitoring.

By using different



Baker Perkins has worked notably hard on deploying industry 4.0 principles into its sector lines. Pic: Baker Perkins

Beyond the energy source of the ovens, the company's newest designs are said to reduce costs, save energy and minimise emissions with features such as better insulation and lighter weight belting. RBS also offers an electric penthouse for its convection style and Emithermic ovens. While the firm's equipment is designed to run for many years, it's easy to exchange the current gas penthouse with an electric version.

As a replacement for costly DGF cracker ovens, RBS developed the new Emithermic XE Oven. This uses Thermatec high



Walter's Jupiter A bakery lines have been among its core areas of focus. Pic: Walterwerk



Robotics are becoming increasingly common for bakery operations, as with Fanuc's systems. Pic: Fanuc

radiant panels, convection baking and electric radiant elements, eliminating the need for the gas burners. "The Thermatec panels and electric heaters deliver a more balanced heat to the product, and impart the high radiant energy required to develop the flavour and texture of the crackers," says Johnston. "Additionally, maintenance is simplified, as electric oven components are easily replaced, eliminating costly downtime replacing, cleaning and tuning gas burners."

### Support from start to finish

As the bakery sector looks to modernise production to ensure optimum efficiency, robotics are becoming increasingly commonplace – and not just in packaging processes. Paul Carter, sales manager system automation, robotics at automation specialist Fanuc UK, notes how the adoption of robotics has been slower in the food industry, including the bakery sector, when compared to other industries. However, this is starting to change.

Highlighting the IFR 2022 World Robotics Industrial Robots Report, Carter notes that global robot installations in the food and beverage industry grew by 12 per cent year on year from 2016 to 2021. In the UK, of the 2,054 industrial robot installations in 2021, 164 were in the food and beverage industry, representing a total

of eight per cent, which is well above the global average.

"Most robot installations in food production lines are for packaging, picking and placing tasks. However, there is a lot more that robots can do," says Carter. "At Fanuc, we believe the adoption of robotics is set to change the face of food manufacturing for the better, not least for producers of baked goods."

Collaborative robots, or cobots, are becoming increasingly popular where space is restricted, as their bases aren't much bigger than an A4 sheet of paper and they can work alongside human staff. Robots are also ideally placed to help in scenarios in which individual bakery processes might be automated but people are still required to move products from one stage to another. Finally, robotic vision inspection systems using AI and machine learning can detect product faults quickly and accurately, helping to speed up production lines while automating quality control.

Providing a case in action, Fanuc joined forces with baking oven manufacturer Wiesheu and retail specialist Wanzl to develop the automatic Bakisto system. Comprising three interconnected systems – a Fanuc cobot; Wanzl's smart baked goods presenter 'BakeOff i' featuring artificial intelligence and a network-enabled

baking oven; and the Wiesheu TrayMotion automatic loading and unloading system – Bakisto automates important tasks for retail bakeries, such as loading baking trays, inserting and removing trays from the oven and restocking displays.

Utilising historical data and current stock levels, the AI-powered BakeOff i estimates daily baked goods demand and predicts when peak baking should take place. The Fanuc cobot then carries the baking trays loaded with frozen baked goods from the refrigeration unit and pushes them into the transport trolley, which runs on rails in front of the preheated oven. The TrayMotion loading system pulls in the loaded trays, allowing the baking process to begin.

After baking, the system automates the cooling process while making space for subsequent production. The Fanuc cobot



Paul Carter, of Fanuc believed there remains significant potential for advanced automation within bakery production Pic: Fanuc

then fills the predefined compartments of the BakeOff i with the finished and cooled baked goods, while feeding new data into the AI system ensures the process is continuously being optimised. Carter concludes: "Fanuc believes that Bakisto is ripe for addressing labour shortages in the food industry by relieving retail workers from repetitive tasks and unsociable working hours, as well as increasing product consistency and reducing food waste."

In the evolving landscape of the bakery market, this is one of many growing cases demonstrating how manufacturers can thrive by adapting to challenges through technological integration. From addressing nutritional preferences to ensuring sustainable practices, these advancements position the industry for competitiveness now and in the future. ♦





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# Mastering the machines

Advances in delivering flexible packaging machinery are continuing to make a major difference, as editor **Neill Barston** discusses, exploring the key releases of several key businesses

**A**s anyone who attended this year's ProSweets event in Cologne will have seen, there were plenty of advancements in machinery on show, right across the spectrum of the market.

Packaging equipment was no exception to this, with companies keen to continue promoting enhancements made to their portfolios that demonstrated ever-more dedication to smart manufacturing with energy-saving features high in demand.

With the notably elevated costs of operating, including significantly uprated costs across Europe and further afield around the world during the past two years, machinery manufacturers have distinctly moved to try and respond with their strongest solutions. This has seen

both 'green features for reduced operating times, as well as wider equipment operators such as Germany's HDM promoting its 'lights out' factory running concepts that caught the eye of visitors to the key show in Cologne at the end of last month.

According to analysis from Allied Market Research, the packaging machinery market is set to have exhibited a continued growth trend, worth \$43 billion globally in 2020, rising to \$69 billion by 2030, with compound rises of 4.7% underlining its comparative strength in spite of wider international market turbulence.

Similarly, the demand for flexible solutions with the segment is clearly also there, with governments internationally moving towards reducing environmental

waste as they strive to achieve 'net zero' 2050 global targets.

However, there have been concerns expressed within industry regarding some international legislation that is on the cards, including Germany's BDSI body stating that EU packaging laws scheduled for this year may well impact negatively on more elaborate seasonal designs in Christmas and Valentines' special occasions.

Regardless of that, there have been a demand for flexible solution within machinery designs, that respond to major market advances in more comparatively environmentally friendly paper-based packaging.

This has been seen with the likes of Nestle's Smarties range that have invested



Flexible packaging machinery lines are becoming key to the confectionery industry. Pic: Shutterstock

business had made notable strides.

“The market has been evolving over the past couple of years – back then it was about innovating packaging and looking at new types of packaging, with the market full of ideas about how packaging could be sustainable.

“Now it is about bringing technologies to the producers, so that has changed my role in that I am now I guide customers in the processes of bringing these solutions to market,” explained Sauer, who noted that there had been a significant shift in the industry whereby companies have integrated sustainability into its mainstream considerations in designing new equipment and packaging.

This, he says, has also translated into considerable research and development within the sector, which is now being refined further as the industry seeks to find the most suitable overall options.

However, with many economies experiencing turbulence, finding cost-effective materials that are appropriate for products across confectionery, snacks and bakery poses its challenges.

“Customers are no longer looking for ‘fancy solutions’ like banana leaves any more or grass paper, it’s more down to earth options that they are choosing. The economic situation also has an influence,

they are also looking for the smallest amount of investment possible – so, this has some impact on us as machinery manufacturers like us when we talk about the solutions required by the market.

“We believe in what we have called ‘future proof solutions,’ so when we are developing solutions like our horizontal wrappers, you modify the machine with a special forming shoulder which gently processes the paper, as well as running plastic on it – which is something that is important to customers as they don’t switch their entire portfolios to running on paper,” added Torsten, who explained that the same principle applied to bagged items using mono-materials.

### ProSweets key developments

The company used ProSweets last month to showcase its SVX Duplex vertical bagging system. As the business described, the core of the machine is a cross-seal drive consisting out of four independently controlled servo motors.

“You might ask what can be changed with vertical bagging, as they’ve been in place for so many years. But this is a completely new generation that rethinks the system. One approach is in cleanability and hygienic factors – when you see it, when you see ▶

significantly in its processing capabilities, as well as a similar move by Mars with its Mars Bars series.

There has also been a reported renewed use of mono-materials requiring less energy to replace, and offering greater recyclability that are also gaining favour within the industry.

### Delivering industry solutions

One such company engaged in placing environmentally friendly manufacturing at the heart of its operations is Germany’s Syntegon equipment and industry solutions group.

Speaking exclusively to *Confectionery Production*, Torsten Sauer, the company’s director of sustainability, believed the



Syntegon's latest SVX packaging machine has had a notable impact since its recent launch. Pic: Syntegon



## FLEXIBLE PACKAGING

the machine you can virtually walk inside it, and it has its duplex, with twin filling stations for bagging as a modular concept. "When it comes using sustainable materials, what is good about it is that you have a completely moveable sealing jaw. The motion can be controlled separately, where you can control speed and sealing time for products, which is nice when you which to make small adjustments within a small window of operation for handling sensitive packaging materials.

"It's a splendid machine, with many features, with cleanability and new design, and modularity, and functions for sustainability including built-in handling of paper and mono-materials, making it a sustainable machine right from the beginning."

### Changing to paper

Reflecting further on packaging materials, he added that companies are certainly showing positive movement in redesigning some of their core confectionery ranges. This in itself is a particularly costly exercise requiring considerable R&D time, yet it is something that customers are consistently demanding right across industry.

"Brands are now looking at certain applications where a switch to paper might be appropriate, especially when we talk about confectionery. Chocolate is a very stable product that can be wrapped in paper, so we see companies like Mars, for instance, starting a global rollout for paper-based solutions.



The Syntegon stand at this year's ProSweets.  
Pic: Neill Barston

"This has also seen some companies that are using secondary wrapping for their product ranges that has an outer layer of paper, so we have further modified our systems for these," he explained, enabling wide-format paper processing, which can in real terms notably cut the amount of overall plastic being used within product ranges.

As he revealed, devising solutions for industry that are both viable and have tangible benefits for sustainability are of considerable importance to its operations.

"So, we see the responsibility of machinery manufacturers such as ourselves to contribute to solutions that are sustainable and saving the planet, but are also affordable to end consumers, and provide the sound business case to equipment users. This is where the challenge is in developing solutions that are good for the environment, but still don't add to additional cost.

"We see a big trend now, many people talking about switching materials, we

have worked a lot on reducing packaging material, and making products smaller. So, it about achieving that without compromising on barrier and product protection, and also saving costs at the same time, which makes our customers very happy."

As regards energy use, Torsten concludes that there are a number of measures that companies can put in place.

Perhaps the hottest topic in this respect is in how to reduce carbon footprint, which he observed was entirely possible through following specific operating policies. This comes on top of the physical design attributes of its machinery also showing key improvements.

"We started about three or four years ago modelling our machines on the lifecycle analysis, so we can model them from 'cradle to grave' including the machine, installation, use and scrapping of them.

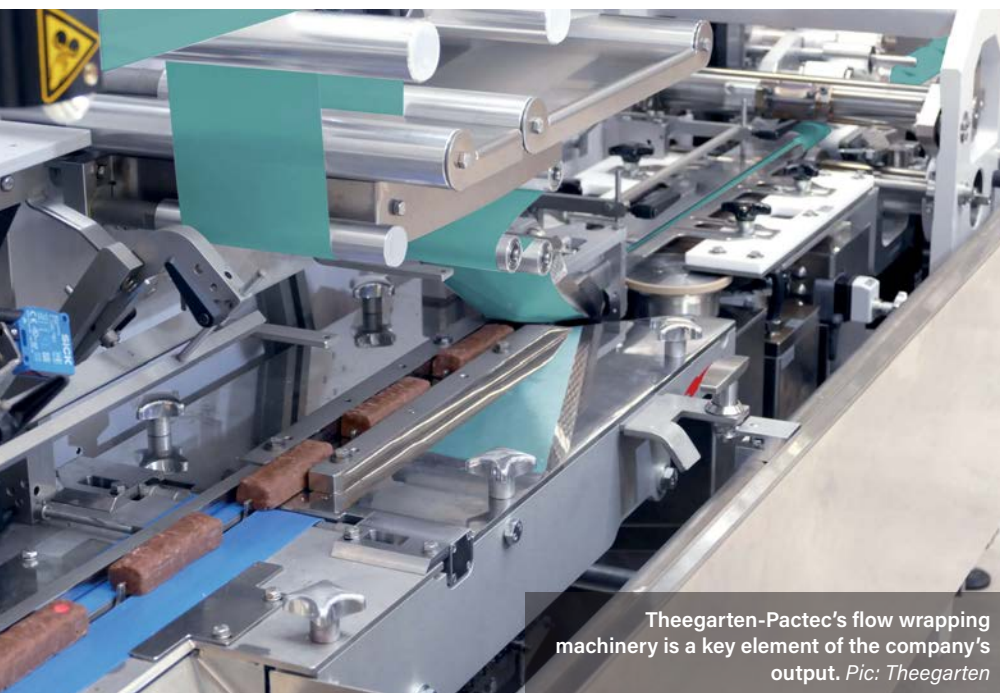
"We can give advice and guidance on how to reduce energy – such as whether they actually need to change the machines, from compressed air to electrical drive systems. is one options. But also knowing what energy you are consuming, and you can save 15% of your energy by modifying unnecessary stand-by mode.

You can also modify the amount of glue that is used, which accounts for around 30 per cent CO<sup>2</sup> output for case packers), and reducing the amount of glue is an easy means of reducing CO<sup>2</sup> impact, as well saving on costs at the same time."

### Machinery design

As *Confectionery Production* has previously reported, fellow German machinery business Theegarten-Pactec is among companies that have placed a strong deal of strategic development in terms of improving the environmental efficiency of its lines.

Notably, the company observed that the trend towards greater sustainability



Theegarten-Pactec's flow wrapping machinery is a key element of the company's output. Pic: Theegarten





**Theegarten has extensively tested sustainable packaging materials on its equipment series: .**  
*Pic: Theegarten-Pactec*

continues unabated and has long since grown from a niche topic into a global movement.

Despite various crises, rising costs and inflation, consumers still attach significant value to environmentally friendly packaging.

According to the Sustainable Product Packaging study published in June 2023 by global consultancy Simon-Kucher & Partners, as many as 62 per cent of consumers in Germany are prepared to pay more for sustainably packaging products, up to an additional seven per cent. Yet, despite this willingness on the part of consumers, confectionery brand manufacturers looking to adopt more environmentally friendly packaging face challenges in other areas. This is because more sustainable materials often present a challenge in the packaging process.

## Sustainable materials

Conventional packaging involves laminating different materials such as plastics, metals and papers together to achieve an optimal combination of strength, flexibility and a barrier function to protect the product. When it comes to sustainability, however, these laminated materials present a problem: they can be difficult or even impossible to separate and thus cannot be recycled.

At present, mono-materials and paper-based packaging materials are among the most commonly used alternatives and are said to offer better recyclability. However, such materials pose greater challenges during the packaging process. They can tear more easily, are more difficult to seal and sometimes have inferior folding properties.

Theegarten-Pactec aims to support producers and brand manufacturers in their quest for improved sustainability. The specialist in small-sized confectionery packaging from Dresden, Germany,

is constantly developing and refining its machines with a systematic focus on processing sustainable materials at industrial scale.

For example, the business re-engineered the FPC5 – its high-speed packaging machine for chocolate bars – to such an extent that it can now process paper-based flow packs in the conventional cold-sealing process as well as in the far more complex heat-sealing process. In fact, the machine is capable of producing flow pack packaging with integrated heat-seal capability and a pure paper content of at least 95 per cent.

The specific characteristics of sustainable packaging materials have also been considered in another area: Theegarten-Pactec has modified the forming shoulder for flow packs processing on the FPC5 to support the production of paper-based flow packs. Due to the materials used and the adaptations to the component's geometry to accommodate the packaging, there is no risk of the paper crinkling or tearing during production of the flow pack.

In addition, the business has also

addressed the issue of sustainability in relation to its high-speed EK4 machine. Capable of processing up to 2,300 products per minute, it can package hard candy in a double-twist wrap of recyclable, wax-free paper. Despite these high packaging speeds, the EK4 still processes the paper reliably and keeps pace with the processing speeds for conventional foil wraps.

It facilitates flexible processing of wax-free paper and other innovative packaging materials, including through infinitely variable adjustment of twist gripper oscillation. The twisting angle can also be adjusted. Furthermore, different models of twist gripper are available for efficient processing of different packaging materials. The EK4 also works with exceptionally high material efficiency, which further enhances its sustainable credentials.

## Suction sealing

In relation to environmentally friendly mono-films, Theegarten-Pactec has developed a special process: suction-supported sealing. The idea behind this invention was inspired by the poor dead-fold characteristics of recyclable mono-materials, which means that packaging has to be closed after folding, either through sealing or using adhesives. However, such approaches risk damaging delicate chocolate products.

With this in mind, Theegarten developed a sealing station positioned immediately after the actual wrapping/packaging process. As soon as a product reaches the sealing station, the sealing tool moves to a distance of 0.5 mm to 1 mm from

**Theegarten's machinery is capable of rapid processing of double twist wrapped confectionery, as displayed at ProSweets. Pic: Neill Barston**





## FLEXIBLE PACKAGING

the product to be sealed before negative pressure is used to suck the packaging onto the sealing stamp. This process avoids direct contact between the packaging and the chocolate product during the sealing process, thereby eliminating the risk of pressure marks or other damage to the product. Active cooling of the ambient air provides additional product safety.

Markus Rustler, CEO of Theegarten-Pactec, said: “The examples above clearly demonstrate that there are many different



For this year's ProSweets, Theegarten showcased its new partner business, Makrev's packaging system capabilities. Pic: Neill Barston



Michael Graf, director of consulting, at Schubert Packaging, demonstrates key eco-packaging materials. Pic: Neill Barston

areas in which we can take targeted action to improve sustainability. We are constantly striving to refine our machinery in the interests of both the environment and our customers.

“Ultimately, only by facilitating industrial processing of sustainable packaging will it be possible for such materials to become established extensively and around the world.”

### Comfort feeding line

For its part, Schubert offered demonstrations of several key areas of its portfolio at this year's ProSweets.

Its TLM comfort feeder answers the problem of processing delays arriving if packaging line's blank magazine runs empty – as machine operators then have to act quickly to avoid unnecessary stops. With its latest system, this issue is now a thing of the past, as can be experienced live on a bar packer at the trade fair. All that is needed is to place the entire pallet of blanks, which are

still in the cutting sheet, into the machine.

An F4 robot then pulls the individual blanks directly from the sheet and feeds them into the erecting process at a rate of 60 cycles per minute.

This advanced procedure also offers another key advantage: the cut sheet can often be further optimised to maximise the use of the packaging material. This saves material and, in turn, resources and costs.

The combination of innovative sheet feeding, high erecting performance as well as loading and sealing offers Schubert customers an exceptionally advantageous machine concept: The bar packer is part of Schubert's TLM Power Compact machine category, which refers to TLM machines that deliver a high performance density in a small space.

Clearly, delivering sustainability objectives has played an influential role in the company's development strategy for its packaging machinery, and business operations as a whole.

This has been reflected in its ongoing Mission Blue Initiative, whereby the Crailsheim-based company has formalised

its own goals, values and specific measures in order to ensure sustainability. Another notable related aspect of its ProSweets appearance included showcasing its sustainable packaging concepts: Dotlock, a technology that enables carton packaging to be produced entirely without glue, as well as a carton-monofilm hybrid solution – also without glue – that greatly minimises the use of plastic.

As previously reported, the company's new digital learning platform, Schubert Learning Space, is gathering place, which is also expected to help drive broader staff technical ability, thus promoting even greater levels of efficiency within operations.

The business said it will be offering preliminary test content in collaboration with customers throughout 2024, and will be made available to support its own staff internally.

It is set to serve as a strong tool to aid retention and development amid an ever-evolving packaging equipment sector that continues to face a number of tests that automated and robotics-based technology is playing its part in addressing. ♦



Schubert's latest comfort feeder system was recently nominated for a World Confectionery Award. Pic: Schubert

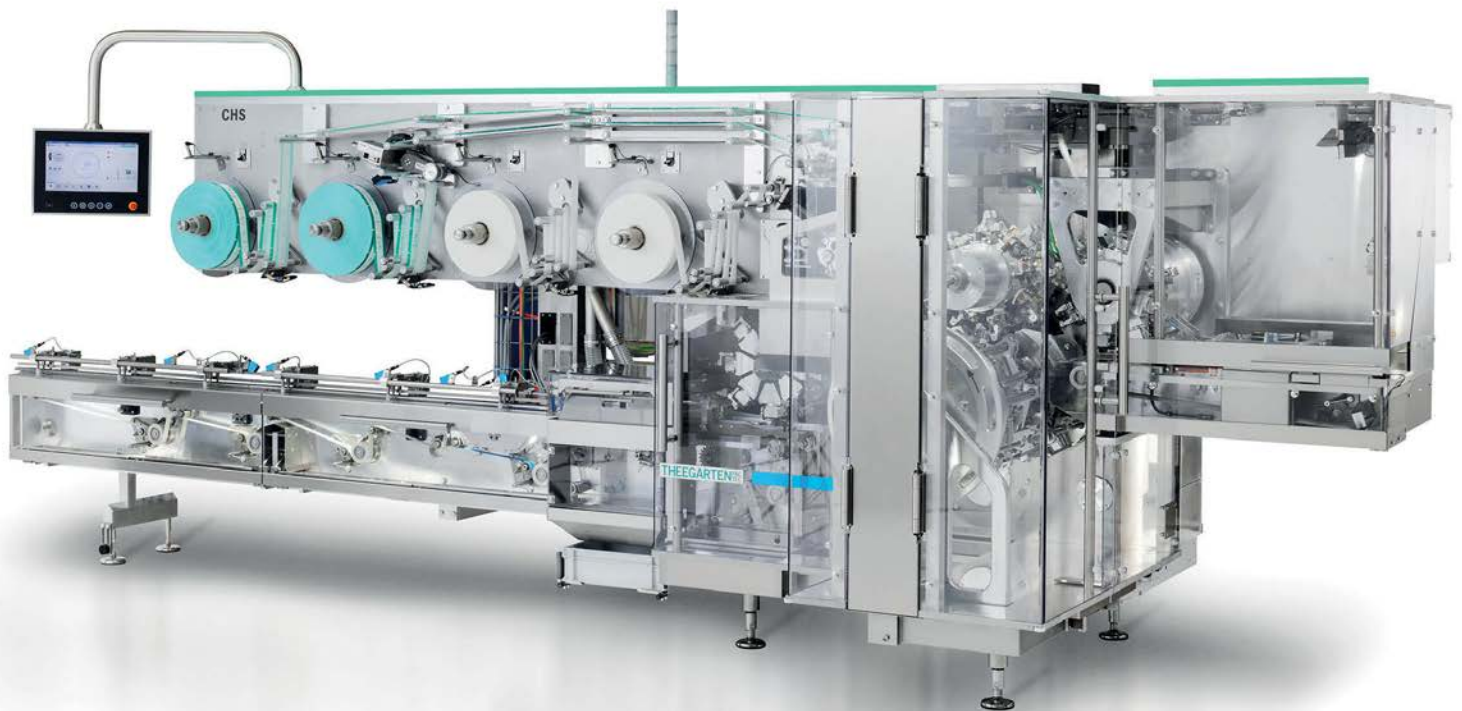




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# Appliance of aeration science

Aerated chocolate ranges have continued in their popularity around the world.  
*Pic: Shutterstock*



*Confectionery Production* explores the latest enrobing and aeration equipment and tools allowing manufacturers to maintain productivity and efficiency in the ever-changing chocolate sector. **Daisy Phillipson** reports

**T**he dynamic chocolate market continues to grow, with NPD experiencing a strong recovery in a post-Covid 19 market.

According to research highlighted by Barry Callebaut, the chocolate confectionery sector is estimated to be valued at over \$130 billion in global retail sales by the end of 2024, with volume growth of two per cent CAGR over the next five years.

Based on its global proprietary research of nearly 12,000 people last August, the company identifies 'Intense Indulgence' as a key 2024 trend, as consumers seek exciting and unique experiences with their chocolate products. Multi-sensorial confectionery is

particularly in, with 65 per cent of global consumers preferring chocolate with multiple flavours and textures and 74 per cent seeking new and exciting experiences.

Premium chocolate continues its winning streak, with 64 per cent of global consumers seeking out premium versions of their favourite chocolates. Concurrently, 'Mindful Indulgence' maintains its spot as the health movement shows no signs of slowing, with Barry Callebaut highlighting the various ways to address demand. Out of the participants, 41 per cent seek vegan or plant-based chocolate, 66 per cent are interested in reduced or no sugar products, 71 per cent find chocolates with clean labels

more trustworthy and 57 per cent seek sustainably produced chocolates.

Aerated and enrobed chocolate products continue to form a significant share of the market, with NPD demonstrating how these processes can be utilised to meet demand in 2024. Taking sustainability and ethical sourcing into consideration alongside the trend for multi-sensory experiences, Hotel Chocolat launched the Better Way Bar last year, pledging 100 per cent of the sales to fund a better way for cacao farming. Ghanaian chocolate praline combined with biscuits and cherries are enrobed in chocolate made using cacao from Saint Lucia, which Hotel Chocolat says embodies



its gentle farming practices.

Addressing demand for healthier indulgence and multi-sensory experiences, Oppo Brothers – known for creating ice cream said to contain up to 60 per cent less calories and sugar – released a number of enrobed products last summer. These include Chocolate Hazelnut Snacking Balls, made with vanilla ice cream enrobed in Belgian milk chocolate and roasted hazelnut pieces, as well as Salted Caramel Biscuit Crunch Ice Cream Sticks, featuring Oppo Brothers' salted caramel ice cream dipped in Belgian milk chocolate and Biscoff-style caramelised biscuit pieces.

In the aerated chocolate category, Nestlé Confectionery recently introduced the new Aero choco-hazelnut flavour sharing bar in the UK, bringing together Aero's signature bubbles texture with hazelnut notes. Barry Callebaut also highlighted Harrods' plant-based innovation, Every Cloud has a Silver Lining, featuring aerated vegan milk chocolate, crunchy biscuit and coffee caramel made using the firm's well known Perla Negra.

### Innovation in enrobing

When it comes to the machinery and technology required to create such chocolates and sweet treats in industrial settings, there has been a notable increase in automation. Amid rising SKUs, stringent food safety and quality standards and sustainability requirements, significant improvements are being made in control and management through mechanical design, as well as improved servicing to optimise production.

Whether enrobing biscuits, candy or other snacks, equipment specialist Aasted notes how products with tempered chocolate containing a majority of the beta crystals will result in a high-quality product that is appealing to customers while having



Hotel Chocolat has released its Better Way bar. Pic: Hotel Chocolat

**“All manufacturers must meet regulatory compliance requirements, consumer expectations for food safety and quality, and specific ingredient claims.”**

Mike Nevines, PTL

a longer shelf life. The company's latest innovation is the StellaNova chocolate tempering machine. Thanks to separate cooling and shearing processes, Aasted notes how it's possible to set the exit temperature as low as 27 degrees while maintaining the highest quality of crystals, as well as achieve a shorter cooling time

of up to 40 per cent. With sustainability in mind, StellaNova is capable of reducing chocolate waste by up to 75 per cent and saving as much as 30 per cent energy.

Aasted also offers a range of enrobing equipment capable of coating various masses such as caramel and sugar with chocolate, as well as caramel, sugar icing and fondant if desired. This can be carried out partially, on the bottom of a product or combined.

The newest Aasted Nielsen chocolate enrobing machine for large scale production has a functional design and improved features, including easy access to the conveyor belt, fast and easy changeover of the enrobing band, pumping and tray units, and precise control and energy efficiency.

For its part, Prefamac offers a range of systems for chocolate and biscuit production, including its Switch Ultra ▶



Nestle is among manufacturers extending its range in aerated chocolate with its latest Aero line. Pic: Nestle





Denmark's Aasted showcased a number of innovations at last year's Interpack, including its SuperNova temperer.  
*Pic: Neill Barston*

enrobing machine, which is designed for chocolate enrobing or coating of a range of products including biscuits, waffles, donuts, truffles and fillings on an industrial scale. The Switch Ultra consists of one machine with one or more removable chocolate tanks and one or more chocolate baths, making it possible to switch flexibly to different types of end products.

### Flexible production

As product ranges continue to expand in line with evolving consumer preferences, flexibility is paramount when it comes to enrobing, but machinery must be capable of addressing the various challenges that can arise. Mike Nevines, Technical Director at machinery business PTL, explains: "All manufacturers must meet regulatory compliance requirements, consumer expectations for food safety and quality, and specific ingredient claims. To prevent cross-contamination, enrobers must be cleaned meticulously when switching between SKUs."

Traditionally, manufacturers had to have separate lines to ensure allergens such as peanuts did not contaminate peanut-free products.

But PTL's machinery has been built to allow fast and efficient disassembly, including its enrober. "Without needing tools or specialist skills, each part of the enrober that has product contact can be removed to a purpose-built trolley, wheeled

to a wash bay and thoroughly washed and dried," adds Nevines. "By speeding up the washing process, PTL clients can change SKUs at will without needing a second line."

Demonstrating this technology in action, Joy Cone opted for a PTL enrober to help with its new product: ice cream cones dipped in chocolate. The easy-to-clean design meant it could add a new SKU while minimising disruption to production. Jeff Hull, Director of R&D at Joy Cone, said: "Thanks to PTL's innovative designs, we could efficiently produce a new item that had a chocolate coating."

Equipment and systems group Bühler's new enrober ChoCoat Pro is also said to be easy to clean and maintain, and can

be used on a wide range of end products including bars, cookies and wafers. As outlined by the company, the top and bottom coating station, driver roller and other required parts can be removed via the side of the enrober, allowing easy access to the machine body without cutting the wire mesh belt. For precise coating, the new vibrating station provides intensive and efficient vibrations, resulting in an accurate output in terms of weight and reduced noise emissions.

### Digital tools

While tempering and enrobing systems require features to ensure easy maintenance and productivity, the integration of digital tools demonstrates the evolving landscape, ensuring efficiency across the entire production line. An example is Kägi, a chocolate wafer manufacturer that has been able to build a smart factory with the support of Bühler's technology.

One of the first actions of the team was to connect most of Kägi's production to the Bühler Insights platform, a digital tool that links devices, operational metrics and analytics. "Connecting Kägi to Bühler Insights platform creates unique transparency on process and machine data," explains Judith Spreitzer, project manager, Bühler Services.

"From raw materials, to baking and filling of wafer sheets, and to chocolate coating, data can now be recorded, analysed and interpreted at any time."

"The fact that Kägi also has machines in operation that are not from Bühler did not pose a problem for us either in our assessment or in visualising the entire process data with Bühler Insights. This enables Kägi to obtain a holistic picture of



Prefamac has developed a strong specialism within the chocolate processing market.  
*Pic: Prefamac*





Flexibility is a key consideration for PTL's enrobing machines. Pic: PTL

current production and product quality at any time and from any location." By linking and visualising the data in Bühler Insights, Kägi expects to see an OEE increase of 5 to 8 per cent. The platform also supports companies in addressing key issues relating to sustainability, such as measuring environmental impacts.

Chocolate processing equipment specialist Sollich, which offers a range of tempering and enrobing solutions, has made further improvements in research and development in the scope of digitalisation. Together with other leading confectionery machine suppliers, the company founded the SweetConnect

digital platform, where users can manage all their integrated production machines at a glance. Documents such as operating instructions, spare parts catalogues and cross-manufacturer maintenance managers are just some of the basic functions made possible with the help of the system.

In conjunction with the 'Fast Lane' remote maintenance tools, data from the application process is transmitted to optimise services and increase machine availability. Regarding AI, the company has introduced self-analysis on its tempering machines, which will enable automatic adjustment of the temperature values in order to reduce human working capacities

and increase the quality of the tempered chocolate at the same time.

### Process control

While the aeration process hasn't shifted drastically over the years, there have been significant improvements in control and maintenance features, resulting in a more reliable, productive and efficient process. Sacmi Packaging & Chocolate's Beta X2A tempering machine has been designed for aerated products, allowing the injection of quantities of gas into the variable speed intensive stirring and mixing sector. This is said to refine the density of the aerated product in a simple yet functional way.

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Chocolate wafer firm Kägi has successfully built a new facility with the assistance of Bühler. Pic: Bühler



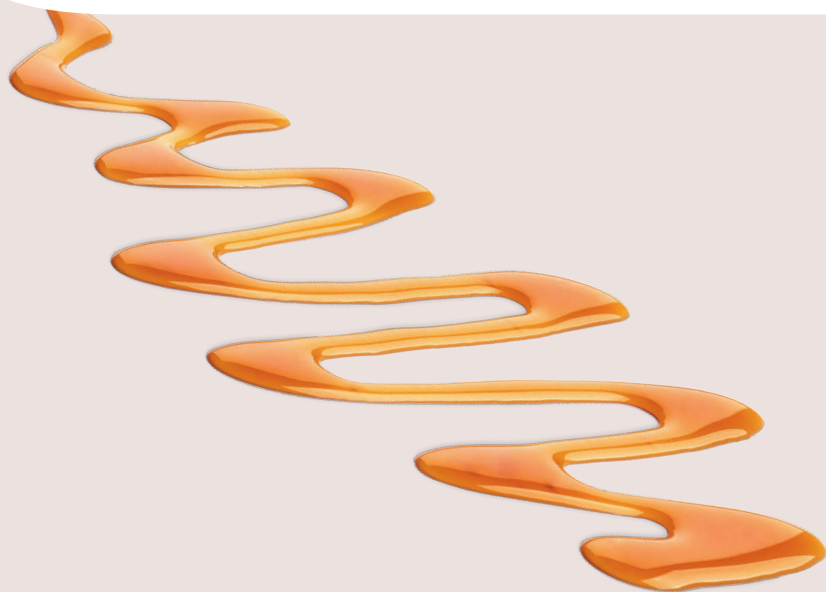
Sollich was among a core of confectionery businesses showcasing the Sweetconnect concept at Interpack.

brand, the tempering machine can also operate in traditional mode when the production of aerated masses is not required. The Beta X2A completes the firm's range for aerated chocolate products, a fundamental accessory to the ventilation circuit for creams and milk chocolate of the Aero Core moulding depositor, which is already standard on Sacmi Packaging & Chocolate moulding plants.

For the aeration of fat-based centre masses and crème fillings, Aasted highlights its SuperNova Orbit, developed for the crystallisation and aeration of fat-based centre masses and crème fillings. The company explains that the system offers a unique platform for the aeration of chocolates, as gas can be injected in the middle of the crystallisation process, making it possible to aerate the product without the use of a traditional mixing head. The injection of gas is carried out simultaneously with the cooling process, resulting in a more controlled operation. ♦



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# ‘Dialling up’ fantastic flavours

While it may well be an age old market segment, fudge, toffee and caramels are not short on new innovations, as Neill Barston finds

Traditional fudge making at a UK store is in high demand.  
Pic: Shutterstock

**T**he production of traditional fudges and toffees remain a valuable confectionery making skill that has been maintained within artisan circles for generations around the world.

While healthy eating may well be far higher on the agenda of many people within all age brackets on an international level, there’s still a place for some occasional indulgences, and this segment continues to stand as a firm consumer favourite.

As *Confectionery Production* has previously reported, there has been a marked shift towards manufacturers targeting the premium end of the market with unusual luxury flavours in order to

**“We expect to see confectionery flavours ‘dial up’ beyond the successful salted caramel.”**

Carol Oldbury, Hames Chocolates

tempt shoppers to part with their hard-earned cash.

Though few are under any illusion that trading conditions are anything other than challenging right now – especially for small and medium-sized enterprises, there’s a commendable level of creativity happening that is at least making the case

for the industry’s survival amid ongoing challenges.

One business that has been making some headway in the past year has been Meadow, operating across sustainable confectionery, dairy and plant-based markets.

Alison Hughes, head of insights, said:

“We are continually focusing on what’s next in consumer trends across the dairy, confectionery and plant-based categories. Fudge, Toffee and Caramel are popular ingredients in many of the world’s favourite confectionery products and make up an essential part of our Inclusions portfolio.

“We know that a big flavour trend for 2024 is Flavour Flashback, which is a nod towards nostalgia. The golden



Meadow has placed a core focus on delivering high quality ingredients, including for confectionery series. Pic: Meadow

brown colours and rich, sweet flavours of fudge, toffee and caramel are perfectly linked to this trend. Traditional desserts such as Sticky Toffee Pudding remain a popular inspiration for the confectionery category, with caramel and butterscotch being signposted by The Food People as increasing in importance.”

### ‘Dial up’ flavour

As the insights specialist noted, she explained the second big trend for this year is Dial It Up, which is all about enhanced flavours.

This is certainly something that has been seen in the UK, and many other regions around the world.

“We expect to see confectionery flavours ‘dial up’ beyond the successful salted caramel to enhance the five basic tastes: sweet, sour, salt, bitter and umami. More complex caramel flavours such as miso caramel and smoked maple caramel have already started to pique consumer interest.

“We also anticipate the key sweet flavour markers in the UK in 2024/25 to be focused on ‘Burnt and Smoky’, with brown butter, butterscotch, dark caramel, smoked caramel and treacle flavours bringing this to life in confectionery.” According to Innova Market Insights (Jan 24), 26 per cent of confectionery launches in the UK in 2023 contained brown flavours. As well as this, 1 in 10 launches in 2023 contained caramel as the leading flavour and this has grown year-on-year.

She added that the company adapts its core fudge, toffee and caramel recipes to create bespoke inclusions that meet our customers’ requirements. This includes adding additional flavour profiles to reflect consumer trends, which we are able to offer

customers in smaller volumes as limited edition seasonal lines.

Meanwhile, also in the UK, Kent’s Fudge Kitchen, has been in celebratory mood after gaining an accolade at the recent 2023 Food Manufacture Excellence Awards Its latest seasonal release comes in the form of Hot Cross Bun Caramels, as well as adding two additions to its chocolate-coated caramel line this year. For the Spring season, the company has unveiled a vibrant new box featuring delicate florals. This latest offering joins a series of sustainability-led brand refresh release guided by luxury packaging design agency Smith & Village.

### Fudge trends

As Carol Oldbury, managing director at Hames Chocolates, observed, while



A new brand of crumbly fudge has just been released from Rainbow Candies Pic: Hames Chocolates

conditions are presently somewhat challenging, there are some positives on the horizon.

She said: “While it’s hard to predict what 2024 has in store for the wider food and drink industry, one thing we can be sure of, is that the popularity of confectionery, and in particular fudge, will not diminish.

“There are a number of consumer trends, we believe will impact the fudge market this year, which confectioners should be aware of including Premium crumbly fudge. As consumer confidence rises, we predict shoppers will be increasingly looking for indulgent treats like premium crumbly fudge.

“In 2023, the treating and snacking market in the UK was worth £13.3bn, with confectionery holding a 40 per cent of



Ingredients including toffee are widely used across confectionery series. Pic: Meadow

this category (worth £5.5bn) highlighting a significant sales opportunity for confectioners.” As she added, last October, its company Rainbow Candies launched a new range of premium crumbly fudge, which was developed in response to the growing demand for luxury fudge.

The range, which is manufactured in its own dedicated candy and fudge manufacturing site in Lancashire, is made with all butter and no palm oil, and comes in nine popular flavours.

While the Bank of England expects inflation to continue to fall in 2024, cost will remain a high priority for consumers, therefore we expect the ‘big night in’ occasion and confectionery sharing bags to be a significant opportunity for confectioners in 2024. This is supported by research, which found 2 in 5 (40 per cent) consumers planned to go out less often and three fifths (61%) intended to spend more cautiously last year.

### Vegan options

During the past few years, there have been a growing number of options for vegans within the fudge and toffee market



segments.

Lesley Jeavons, of Brighton-based Jeavons' Toffee felt that while there were constraints on consumer spending ability, there is still demand out there for its range.

She said: "Veganism continues to be a growing market, made up not only of vegans, but those who are dairy-free, or flexitarians who are aiming to reduce their consumption of animal products for health (not particularly the case with confectionery!) and environmental reasons. Though conversely, due to cost-of-living issues forcing people to economise, there appears to be a slight downturn.

"Many vegan confections made by independent producers are more expensive, due to smaller scale production, but consumers are crying out for cheaper, like for like, alternatives to the dairy-based sweets they're accustomed to.

But they don't want to economise on taste, and for them to be prepared to pay a premium, the quality of the treat has to be so good that it's worth it.

"We are still the only people to our knowledge who have mastered a vegan toffee that's excellence is on a par with its traditional dairy equivalent, but rather than this catapult us towards a wider market, we've found it hard to break through with our true innovation."

As she added, the company examined outsourcing, but as the key to its recipe's success is its recipes, non-disclosure agreements can be hard to strike and agree with.

There has also been an increased level of competition with the past couple of years that has proved an additional issue that has prompted it to revise its strategies.

"With overheads continually increasing, and particularly the cost of cocoa about to skyrocket, we feel it's prudent to focus on what makes us unique and



The Jeavons team received a World Confectionery Award last year for its vegan toffee. Pic: Confectionery Production

make the star of our products our chewy and creamy vegan toffee, with chocolate given a second billing on treats such as chocolate eclairs, for those who can't do without the chocolate," added Lesley.

She concluded that the business is in the process of investing in new machinery to produce ranges under its own banner in order to have a distinct point of difference in the market.

## Caramel market

In terms of the caramel market, this is an area that is also continued to be regarded with a good deal of affection by many consumers, with a number of brands active around the world.

Within the US, one such business is Nassau Candy, producing a broad array of confectionery for the region

Heather Mayer, marketing manager of the company, said: "Caramels are an

American favourite, conjuring up feelings of carnivals with family and grandma cooking in the kitchen. We've successfully translated that homemade feel to our custom caramel recipe that's made daily in our factory with great success.

"It's this dedication to detail that has made our sea salt enrobed caramels one of our long-time best-selling items. We don't see that going away anytime soon.

Where we see the biggest change in the caramel space isn't with the manufacturing process itself but with the packaging. Expect to see more single-serve and snack-size packs of caramels and other confections.

This move to go small is all stemming from the trend of "little everyday indulgences."

As she added, driven by social media, consumers are looking for a balance between indulgence and keeping up with their active lifestyles when it comes to the kinds of product choice that they are typically making.

Smaller, portion-controlled packs allow them to "treat" themselves but on a smaller scale.


"That's why we have plans in place to roll out single serve options of our caramels and our other popular factory-made items later this year," she enthused of her plans to drive the business forward. ♦



Nassau Candy has been active in the caramel market for the US.

Pic: Nassau Candy

# Making a difference on the ground



Heather K. Terry, CEO of GoodSAM believes every management leader needs to get out on the ground and visit core supply chain partners in the farming sector. Pic: GoodSAM

Setting up ethically-focused GoodSAM Foods four years ago in the confectionery and snacks trade has been a rollercoaster ride for CEO Heather K. Terry, as editor Neill Barston discovers

**C**reating a brand that places ethical sourcing in its truest form is something which requires a high level of dedication, passion and drive to accomplish amid a host of challenges in retail markets.

But that's exactly what Heather K. Terry and her team have done in forging GoodSAM Foods over an extremely eventful few years that have seen the business grow exponentially.

As *Confectionery Production* has previously reported, it's certainly taken some considerable effort to achieve this position, but last summer it reported a 171% year-on-year upturn in chocolate and wider treat sales for a record-breaking half-year performance.

Notably, the company, which offers chocolate, snacks and nuts series, stated it has continued its upward progress in exceeding fundraising goals and sales for the first half of 2023, with the business attaining B Corp status at the end of last year proving a significant milestone.

So it's perhaps no small co-incidence that the comparatively rapid growth of the US snacking venture based upon working directly with farmers for its product portfolio, comes as consumers are increasingly becoming far more savvy than ever before about the provenance of their shopping baskets.

While just a few short years ago, there was a common argument among analysts that consumers aren't really demanding

sustainably-sourced goods, and that it was largely hype-driven.

This is certainly far from the case today, with a number of recent major studies showing that shoppers, particularly younger buyers under 30, have placed a high priority on transparency in food chains.

"As a consumer packaged goods company, we believe that in working with the farmers as the stewards of the soil, if they are going to get the good planetary outcomes that we want, as well as the quality, then we have to engage with them on a level where their survival and livelihood is at the forefront of our mind as a business.

"So, I had got into this as I'd been in





GoodSAM works closely with farmers in South America. Pic: GoodSAM

consumer goods for over a decade and never thought that I'd be the founder of another company, but I got roped in by some of my colleagues at Beyond Brands, who believed that I could lead something like this and were very encouraging," enthused Heather of the ambitious, environmentally-focused venture she took on at the end of 2020 at the height of the pandemic, and has continued its momentum ever since.

It's certainly a world away from her original calling, as she initially trained to be an actress, even appearing on Broadway, before deciding to make the switch into a very different pathway in life.

As she added, the inception of her latest business at one of the most challenging periods in recent retail history is no small feat, and as she reflected, it proved 'a very

**“I really believe that if you are leading a food company, a confection company where farmers are attached to it, you have a responsibility to be there on the ground”**

Heather K. Terry

interesting time' in trying to establish its foundations amid the challenges of social distancing and disrupted business patterns.

But as she revealed, her experiences so far with GooSAM have benefitted from her previous endeavours within the confectionery industry, in founding another confectionery company.

"My original business NibMor Chocolate still exists, as we were early in the 'digging around behind the curtain' of the industry, and my business partner Jennifer Love and I founded it together,



Chocolate coated peanuts are among the company's latest ranges

which was rare for two women in 2010, and I am still one of the only women who is wondering the countryside of multiple countries, meeting with farmers.

"When I was given the chance to go down to Colombia with GoodSAM, that was really 'ground zero for us, as I realised that we could get directly to farmers, and there was a buying power if we could partner with companies like Thrive Market (a US ecommerce group), we could do something that was really revolutionary and control the whole system of taking produce from farmers," added Heather of the formative moves to establish a workable trading model for its operations.

### Building the business

As Heather revealed, delivering such core frameworks behind the business has been vital to create it building-blocks for growth, and equally importantly, serve the needs of those farming communities.

Moreover, as she observed, there had been an almost 'sinister' edge to how it appeared trade within the sector had in some instances been done before, where she would be quietly told about the real conditions

in many locations, which she has set out to change in placing transparency and completely ethical trading models in place.

"I really believe that if you are leading a food company, a confection company where farmers are attached to it, you have a responsibility to be there on the ground, and to understand fundamentally what they need to operate at the highest capacity for you, and in order for their own survival.

"This is everything to us, especially where climate is an issue, which it is in many of the areas that we work, as our end products are completely dependent on it," explained Heather, who revealed that seeking out the right partners in industry has been a core factor in its development and ongoing success to date.

### Tackling the big issues

In terms of the future, she noted that while confectionery is regarded as 'being in the business of providing happiness for some – we need to now make it work for every stakeholder in the entire network," explained Heather, who noted that tackling the root causes of child labour in particular was of huge concern.

As she asserted, far too little progress had been made by the industry as a whole in tackling such issues at scale. She urged major corporations to follow the example

set by smaller independent companies such as itself to build on processes of supporting communities with the most effective assistance possible.

On another major topic of climate change, at the end of 2023, Heather was invited to participate at the COP28 environmental event in Dubai, which delivered what was considered a historic first, recognising that agricultural systems must be factored in.

"I was involved in four session what were all wonderful – with COP, a lot of people don't know about it. We should all care about it, as food is directly related to climate, it was the first time that food was on the menu at the COP event – and we all know that regenerative agriculture and sustainable practices have the ability to take down carbon and methane emissions very quickly.

"It's a shock that it's taken the largest climate conference this long to understand that farmers and farming communities have a huge role to play in this. What we stand for at GoodSAM before anything else is that we are there for farmers, as we can't have regenerative agriculture without them." ♦

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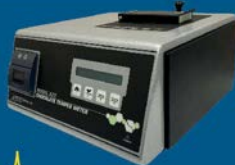
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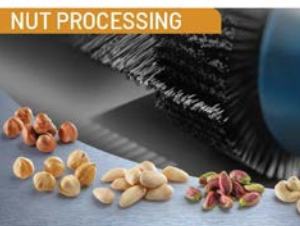
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10-12 March,  
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[www.candyusa.com](http://www.candyusa.com)

### International Food & Drink Event

25-27 March  
Excel Centre, London  
[www.ife.com](http://www.ife.com)

## APRIL 2024

### World Cocoa Conference

21-24 April, Brussels  
[www.worldcocoaconference.com](http://www.worldcocoaconference.com)

## MAY 2024

### Sweets & Snacks Expo

13-16 May, Indiana Convention Centre,  
Indianapolis, US  
[sweetsandsnacksexpo.com](http://sweetsandsnacksexpo.com)

## SEPTEMBER 2024

### World Confectionery Conference

12 September, Brussels Belgium  
[www.confectioneryconference.com](http://www.confectioneryconference.com)

## NOVEMBER 2024

### Gulfood Manufacturing

5-7 November  
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[www.gulfoodmanufacturing.com](http://www.gulfoodmanufacturing.com)

## DECEMBER 2024

### Chocotec

10-12 December  
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# The pick of the confectionery mix

Confectionery Production casts its eyes over some of the latest and most intriguing confectionery and snack offerings unveiled this month

### Breakaway final countdown

After more than 50 years in production, this is the last month that Nestle's Breakaway chocolate bar will be in production. Get them while they are still here! Pic: Nestle



### Quality Street

An industry study of Nestlé's most popular brands based on their average monthly search volume in the UK has seen Quality Street emerge as the nation's favourite confectionery



### Divine flavour

Divine – the world's only farmer-owned Fairtrade chocolate maker – is set to launch a range of shareable Dessert Bars. Available through Amazon and its own site. Pic: Divine



### Latest Aero

A new product innovation from Nestlé has been unveiled in the form of Aero's latest sharing bar, which has been unveiled in its choc-hazelnut flavour. Pic: Nestle



### See's Candies

See's Candies is enjoying an especially busy start to the year. The California-based candy company has delivered a key new release in the form of its latest Limited Time Sweet, Mint Chocolate Chip. Pic: Sees





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