

Growing sustainably

A year ago, Italian closures manufacturer Pelliconi opened a new manufacturing plant near Shanghai in China. Pelliconi Suzhou Closures Manufacturing Co Ltd supplies Carlsberg with Maxi P-26 closures, the aluminium ring-pull bottle caps made on production lines supplied by Sacmi Imola.

“In this market we will continue to innovate our processes and products, bringing the Pelliconi know-how on the most famous beverage trademarks and on the tables of Chinese consumers,” says Pelliconi’s chief executive Marco Checchi in the company’s sustainability report.

“The Chinese project paves the way to all the possibilities that such a large market offers to players focused on quality and sustainability. We personally found out how advanced are the rules in China concerning environment and sustainability: this made us very happy because it fits perfectly with our vision. We have great expectations from the whole Far East and together with our SIMEST partner we are already planning a Phase 2 of this project, that I hope will come through very early.”

The Suzhou plant is a US\$12 million investment built with three production lines capable of making up to 1.6 million caps a day giving a yearly capacity of 1.2 billion. In 2018, another line at the 8,000 sqm facility would add capacity of 400m caps a year.

The closures segment is also poised to grow significantly in India where Pelliconi plans to start making Maxi P-26 caps in the second quarter of 2018.

Earlier in 2017, during a state mission of the Italian government to India, Pelliconi signed a co-operation agreement with Oriental Containers Limited, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Oricon Enterprise Ltd for jointly developing the closure business in the country by implementing new business lines in addition to the metal and plastics closures manufactured by Oriental Containers Ltd.

Pelliconi has been family owned since it was formed in 1939 and produced metal crowns from the start, using multi-die presses from Sacmi. Checchi has worked for the company for around 33 years and took over its management from his father-in-law.

The Pelliconi group’s other four production plants are in Italy, at Ozzano

Italy-based closures manufacturer Pelliconi is expanding its geographical footprint and product offer. Mónica Higuera reports



Marco Checchi, chief executive of Pelliconi: planning Phase 2 of its project in Asia to manufacture ring-pull closures for bottled beers such as Tuborg

covered area, is one of the biggest plants for crown manufacture worldwide,” said Checchi.

“The domestic market of beverages in Egypt is still suffering from the tourism crisis and the consumption is much lower than what it was about three years ago.

“The eastern African markets, instead, are on a stable growth rate. Ethiopia is driving growth.”

With capacity to make more than 30 billion closures a year, Pelliconi’s sales in 2016 were €136 million (\$162m) with ten percent growth forecast for 2017.

Pelliconi serves more than 600 customers worldwide, including all leading beverage sector companies

such as Anheuser-Busch InBev, Carlsberg, Castel, Coca-Cola, Danone, Diageo, Heineken, Nestlé Waters, Pepsi Cola and SABMiller.

In 2015, Pelliconi and a partner operating in the hop business established Brewpark Sas, a French company with the aim to develop sales in the micro-breweries located in the Benelux area.

Not only has Pelliconi expanded its manufacturing footprint to four



dell’Emilia near Bologna – its headquarters – and at Atessa (its largest plant); in the US in Orlando, Florida; and in Cairo, Egypt.

“While Ozzano dates from 1959 and is our oldest plant, our major plant is at Atessa in southern Italy, which, with its 28,000 sqm of



PROFILE

continents, and its product portfolio in the closures business for beverages from crowns to threaded aluminium caps, pull-ring and screw-on plastic caps, it now offers PVC-free closures for baby food.

“We aim to define a new standard in the baby-food business, a closing system that will allow us to approach a world unexplored to us, complementary but separate from the beverage business.

“Pelliconi, together with partners Actega and Sacmi, has developed its SoPure solution that is performing well in the limited market tests that have been carried out to date in Europe.”

The new SoPure closures are said to guarantee a much lower amount of migration in foodstuffs, especially in food containing fats, and have a smaller environmental impact once they are introduced in waste management processes.

“The PVC-free technology that we are using does not contain any plasticisers, and has been demonstrated to yield extremely low migration in general. It is premature to name our principal customer at present, but we have been working extensively together and expect a full commercial release before the end

Ring-pull bottle crowns: a long history

Aluminium crowns with ring pulls were first tried on bottles in the 1930s. But their penetration into the bottled beers and soft drinks markets has been slow, mainly because they are a premium product that sells at a multiple of the cost of a conventional crown.

Pre-scored aluminium crown caps were made in the 1960s in the US by American Flange and later in Europe by Wicanders. In 1982 Swedish inventor Sven-Ake Magnusson, while at Wicanders, first produced a precursor of the MaxiCrown using tinplate with a metal ring attached to the shell. He later developed an improved version with an aluminium shell and plastic ring which became



the current standard, Maxi P. Even the latest Maxi P has been around for more than 20 years. It was first developed by Magnusson in 1989, and is made from 0.21 or 0.24mm aluminium with a HDPE ring pull and a polyethylene sealing ring.

Because of the need to score the caps and attach the ring pull, the lines are more complex than conventional crown cork operations. The aluminium sheets are lithographed in-house. The basic aluminium crowns are created

with more complex tooling to form the tab and the score and then are delivered to the machines which have plastics feeding and forming tooling to mould the ring pull.

of the year. Interest has been expressed from other major food companies and we expect to grow our presence significantly in this sector in the months and years ahead.”

In addition to food closures, Pelliconi is carrying out studies on other products for the pharmaceuticals and personal care sectors.

“We continue to invest resources to ensure the best possible balance

between growth, environmental protection and responsibility towards our people, communities and all stakeholders, and we are even more convinced that this is the best way to compete in the market.

“We are convinced that our approach to sustainability in business is the best choice to make to continue the success that has allowed us to become what we are today.”



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