

# BARA and PPMA link puts spotlight on automation

The growing importance of robotics to the PPMA members' customer bases and the need to compete in a global economy has led to the amalgamation of the British Automation & Robotics Association (BARA) with the PPMA.

The move will help maintain a strong supplier base for the end user community and provide access to technical support from the membership.

The reasons behind the move included the recognition of the role robotics and automation play in an increasingly globalised market, while the associations also share a similar customer base, aspirations and values.

"Combining the strengths of



Professor Ken Young of BARA (left) and Chris Buxton, CEO, PPMA shake on the deal

both parties gives us a real opportunity to address the technical, commercial and environmental challenges faced by industry," explained Chris Buxton, CEO, PPMA.

BARA will become an integrated sub-group of the

PPMA, have its own council of representatives and a director of automation and robotics. The associations believe that the resources of the two associations – people, knowledge and finance – will make a real difference to the promotion of the technical advantages of robotic solutions to the end user community.

President of BARA Mike Wilson, who will become the director of automation

and robotics, said: "The combination is much more than the sum of the parts. It is particularly important in this current difficult environment that the automation message is spread to as many people in industry as possible."

## Exports grow but don't get carried away

Exports of UK packaging machinery in 2008 showed huge gains, according to preliminary figures from the PPMA. Weighing equipment also gained ground and despite processing equipment showing a slight downward trend, total exports for all categories grew by 18 per cent on figures for 2007 to reach £425.1m.

However, the PPMA's CEO Chris Buxton cautioned: "The major impacts of recessionary changes are unlikely to show until the end of the first quarter in 2009."

Buxton added, "Despite the Government's recent introduction of the Working Capital Scheme, Enterprise Finance Guarantee and the Capital for Enterprise Fund, there is little evidence that it has been effective in making capital more available for investment.

"Many of our members are reporting that customers are deferring purchasing decisions which does not bode well for at least the early months of 2009."

Packaging grew by 21 per cent to £224.9m (£178.1m), with the US maintaining its position as the strongest export market in 2008 at £34.2m – a growth of 12 per cent. In fact the top five markets of the US, Irish Republic, France, Netherlands and Germany all showed gains.

Weighing equipment rose by 19 per cent to £46.9m with Germany taking over the top spot with a staggering growth of 48 per cent to reach £6.2m. Imports fell collectively by 4 per cent to £478.8m with processing imports the only group to show an increase at £140.2m (3 per cent down on 2007).

## Standard of living to boost demand

Spurred by rising economic output and an improved standard of living, resulting in increased consumer spending, world demand for packaging machinery is forecast to grow 5.2 per cent annually to \$39.8bn by 2012.

The study from the Freedonia Group also states that market gains will be affected by a deceleration in global fixed investment expenditure growth.

However, the introduction of better performing equipment will lead to the replacement of older units by new packaging machinery that is faster; more flexible; energy efficient; and minimises waste.

Sales in developing areas will outpace the developed world. China will register the largest gains, expanding by more than

\$3.3bn from 2007 to 2012. China will also surpass the US to become the world's largest market.

Increases are also expected in India and Russia, as well as in lower-volume markets such as Ukraine, Iran, Indonesia, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Mexico, South Africa and Turkey.

However sluggish packaging machinery demand will impact on developed nations with the UK, Germany, Italy and Japan expected to be the hardest hit.

Labelling and coding equipment will record the strongest gains driven by rising consumption of label-intensive nondurable goods, a growing need for tracking techniques and increased labelling regulations.



Demand for wrapping, bundling and palletising equipment will also rise fuelled by improvements in machine design. However, filling and form/fill/seal equipment will remain the most widely used type of packaging machinery, accounting for close to 25 per cent of the 2012 market total. [www.freedoniagroup.com](http://www.freedoniagroup.com)

IN BRIEF

The Food Machinery Company has been appointed the UK and European representative for the Taiwanese JENG YUH range of Vacuum Cooling equipment.

It has just installed its first system at TAIKO Foods in London, a Sushi manufacturer.

Chilling times for 50kg of rice from 95°C to 20°C are just over four minutes, the company claims.

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Friedheim International has been appointed the exclusive agent for the UK and Ireland by Pfankuch Maschinen GmbH.

The appointment covers sales, service, spare parts and training for the company's range of collating and wrapping systems.

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GEA Pharma Systems, a global technology leader for pharmaceutical processing solutions, has signed an agency representation agreement with ACE Technologies, of Mumbai, to sell its range of GEA Courtoy tablet presses throughout India.

The development adds an important sales channel for GEA Pharma Systems and is expected to have a positive effect on the company's market growth in the region.

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US group CC Industries Inc (CCI) has created a new company, Provisur Technologies, to sell its range of food processing equipment.

Provisur will be home to Formax® forming and slicing equipment, Weiler® grinding and mixing equipment, Beehive® meat recovery equipment, and the Young and Associates forming equipment.

# Fresh look at food mixing creates efficiencies

Increased productivity is the main advantage of a partnership between Cryogenic solutions provider Air Products and mixer-grinder specialist Weiler.

Air Products has combined its Freshline® Liquid Nitrogen Injection Solution (LIN-IS) with Weiler's mixer and mixer-grinder range to deliver fully integrated food mixing, grinding and cooling solutions.

"Pooling our knowledge and experience means we can offer processors the best of both worlds," commented Dave Stone, general manager – Europe, Africa & Middle East, Weiler Beehive.

"We can now respond to some of the most difficult technical and processing challenges, resulting in a more efficient and cost-effective manufacturing process and an improved bottom line for our customers."

Claimed to offer benefits across a wide range of food processing applications, the combined technologies are suited to red meat applications while in the future it may also be applicable for the poultry, fish, seafood and vegetable markets.

The advantages, explains Weiler, are that products are quickly blended into an

homogenous mix while being cooled consistently and rapidly using the LIN-IS's cryogenic technology.

Both the Freshline LIN-IS and Weiler's mixer-grinders are designed to the latest hygienic standards and can be connected to a CIP (Clean-In-Place) system. Operation, cleaning and maintenance are simplified through full software integration.

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## Simply the Best in processing

PPMA members came up trumps in the recent Food Processing Awards 2009 taking four of the 10 awards on offer.

Automated Packaging Systems was voted company of the year for its innovative, consistent approach to packaging, epitomised by its FAS Sprint.

Industrial Washing Machines (IWM) won the award for Best Environmental Initiative in recognition of its achievements in producing the EDi range of washers, the first utensil washers to appear in the



Industrial Washing Machines won Best Environment Initiative – Carl Hollier, managing director IWM (left) collects the award

Government's Water Technology List, and also in installing a tray washer system

for A F Blakemore & Son, which has resulted in a dramatic 89 per cent reduction in waste.

The award for packaging solutions went to PFM Packaging Machinery for its full range of machinery for reclosable bags, in various styles including the new Steelo stand-up four-corner-seal pouches.

KUKA Automation + Robotics took the Robotics Award for its high-speed palletising solution and its ability to palletise bulk products such as food processing ingredients.

## National Skills Academy

CenFRA (Centre for Food Robotics & Automation) has been appointed the UK's Strategic Champion for robotics and automation within food and drink manufacture, by the National Skills Academy (NSA).

It will offer impartial advice,

training and project management solutions for the food and beverage sector and CenFRA will be working in conjunction with the NSA to develop a range of online learning packages.

CenFRA has also set up a

Technical Advisory Group (TAG) to provide the food sector with access to the latest technical knowledge and support and provide assistance in linking collaborative research programmes.

www.cenfra.co.uk



## Automation strategy reduces risk and boosts competitiveness

Market demand for complete automation solutions has led Bosch Rexroth to launch a business strategy that in effect turns it into a sole supplier which, it claims, will help UK machine builders be more competitive in the global market.

The automation strategy, according to Trevor Osborne, UK Automation sales manager, is directed towards minimising time to market, production time, overall cost of ownership and the risks that machine builders face in the marketplace.

The strategy creates automation solutions on a sole

supplier basis by interlinking a variety of technologies – hydraulics; electric drives; pneumatics; safety; controls; conveying and mechanics – which have traditionally been split into individual offerings.

Based on the premise that no single technology can meet all efficiency and commercial targets, Bosch Rexroth believes that by reducing the supplier base the cost of procurement will be significantly lowered and management processes made easier.

Considerable savings, not least in the crucial area of energy consumption, can be

made by the intelligent interlinking of a variety of technologies to make UK machine builders' solutions more competitive and attractive, explained Stuart Williams, UK automotive manager.

Another plus, says Bosch Rexroth, is that common mechanical standards across many technologies provides ease of operation and reduces the risk to OEMs as responsibility for their operation lies with Bosch Rexroth and not the machine builder and a broad supplier base.

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## Sewtec invest in the future

Automated solutions specialist Sewtec Automation is investing £500,000 to expand and upgrade its premises in Dewsbury, West Yorkshire.

The 10,000 sq ft expansion to its current space will provide room for additional equipment; give a smoother work flow through the factory and help to increase response times, says Sewtec.

The investment responds to

continuing strong demand for automated equipment for handling and packing for industries including food, tobacco and pharmaceutical, explains the company.

"In tough economic times, it is all the more important for manufacturers to maximise production efficiencies and throughput. This investment programme will ensure that we are well placed to respond

quickly to develop equipment and systems to meet specific customer requirements," commented Sewtec managing director Bernard Meehan.

The expansion plans also include increased office accommodation for the administration, control and electrical engineers, and design teams.

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## Disabled machinery causes death

Naturediet Pet Foods has been fined £157,500 following the death of a worker who became trapped in packaging machinery. The conviction followed an incident on February 1 2006 when 40-year old employee, Marcus Snow, was working in the packing department of the company in Chiddingfold, Surrey.

The accident occurred when a semi automatic machine used to transfer finished cartons of dog food onto a conveyor became jammed. In an attempt to clear the fault Snow entered the machine and became trapped when a pneumatic pick-up unit descended and pinned him to the stack of trays leading to his death by asphyxiation.

The accident was blamed on a faulty safety mechanism and the failure to ensure approved safety measures were in place.

Photoelectric light curtains were wired out allowing Snow full access to the machine. The interlock on the hinged access gate to the machine enclosure had also been bypassed.

Gross negligence manslaughter charges were dropped when the HSE accepted a guilty plea from the company on a Health and Safety at Work Act charge. Naturediet has since moved to new premises which have undergone a full HSE inspection.

*(HSE's job is to protect people against risks to health or safety arising from work activities.)*

www.hse.gov.uk

**Health & Safety legislation discussed in this issue – see page 37**

## PPMA Show hosts awards

The PPMA Machinery Award of Excellence, part of Starpack 2009, has extended the entry deadline to April 17. The awards will be presented at a gala dinner and awards ceremony during the PPMA Show 2009 (Sept 29 - Oct 1).

PPMA members and their customers are urged to enter and show off their technical excellence to visitors.

*Machinery Update* editor Mary Murphy said, "This is a golden opportunity for members to show off their technical prowess. Judging by the clever systems which appear on our pages, technical innovation is alive and kicking, and it would be a great shame if members did not take up this opportunity."

Companies will be rewarded for advances in machinery design or development which improve the performance of a machine or system and provide customers with flexibility, reliability, better performance, and sustainable production techniques.

For more information or to enter visit [www.starpack.uk.com](http://www.starpack.uk.com)  
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## Tapping into Asian markets

End of line manufacturer Cermex has opened a South Asian subsidiary in Bangkok – Cermex South Asia-Pacific.

The company now has more than 400 machines installed in Asia. It recently opened a plant in Beijing to manufacture shrink-wrappers, case packers and palletisers.

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# Exports and product launches boost sales

Optimism rules at Allen Coding Systems, a unit of Illinois Tool Works (ITW), which is expanding into new export markets and planning a range of launch products into both contact and non-contact coding markets.

Allen Coding's exports from the UK already stand at 50 per cent but with an increasing focus on Eastern Europe and Asia this is set to grow substantially. As part of this strategy the company has recently appointed Forintek as its sole distributor for Russia, where it will represent Allen's complete range of high performance thermal transfer and hot foil coding solutions, plus associated consumables.

The company will also be widening its portfolio of both non-contact and contact coding systems and although details are still under wraps, managing director Adrian Shepherd said, "We are anticipating adding two new products to our current laser range during Q2."

In the UK and Western Europe the company believes it is in a good position to track the retailing trends that are emerging during recessionary times. "As the major retailers move into lower cost products

they will start to consider more financially attractive options," states Shepherd.

"Differentiation of products will be among the keys to growth during difficult economic times. We have to adapt to these trends while also serving an emerging group of smaller manufacturers. This will hinge on our ability to provide quality products but from a low cost manufacturing base," he added.

Shepherd cited the success of Allen's 53LTI system, an entry-level thermal transfer coder launched in 2008. "Interestingly", said Shepherd, "this cost effective coder, initially aimed at providing food industry users of traditional hot foil coders with the opportunity to upgrade to a more versatile but economic system, is also having success in Asian markets where it is viewed as a top end coder."

Shepherd sees market growth in sectors such as tea, coffee, food and spices; and will be actively expanding into Asian markets such as Malaysia, Korea, and Taiwan. The company will also be looking for lower cost manufacturing bases to augment its operations which include ITW Betaprint, Spain. ITW also has a number of



Adrian Shepherd, managing director, Allen Coding

coding companies based in the Americas which provide opportunities to share technologies around the world.

A major benefit for Allen Coding Systems is that it operates with complete autonomy but within a large organisation that provides excellent R&D facilities and back-up, believes Shepherd. "As part of ITW we can operate cost efficiently and at speed, while being infinitely adaptable to market needs. This gives us real differentiation in the market."

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## Profits up – demand stable

A good performance by the pharmaceutical division helped the Optima Group to an 11 per cent increase in consolidated turnover for 2008 to €190m.

Innovations and new developments offer real potential but Optima warns that there may be a slow down in investment in the present economic climate.

However order books remain full with strong forecasts for the rest of 2009.

The group believes that its focus on the pharmaceutical and consumer sector (food products, chemicals, air and water filters, and cosmetics) and nonwovens (paper hygiene) which cater for basic human needs will ensure

demand for its products remains stable.

Optima Group opened the first of three planned manufacturing facilities in China with a facility in Jiading, Shanghai, where it manufactures packaging machines for non-woven paper products.

[www.optima-ger.com](http://www.optima-ger.com)