The Vetropack Magazine | 2024

VETRO TIME

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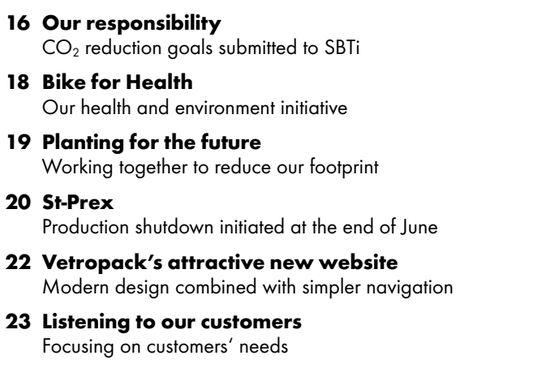

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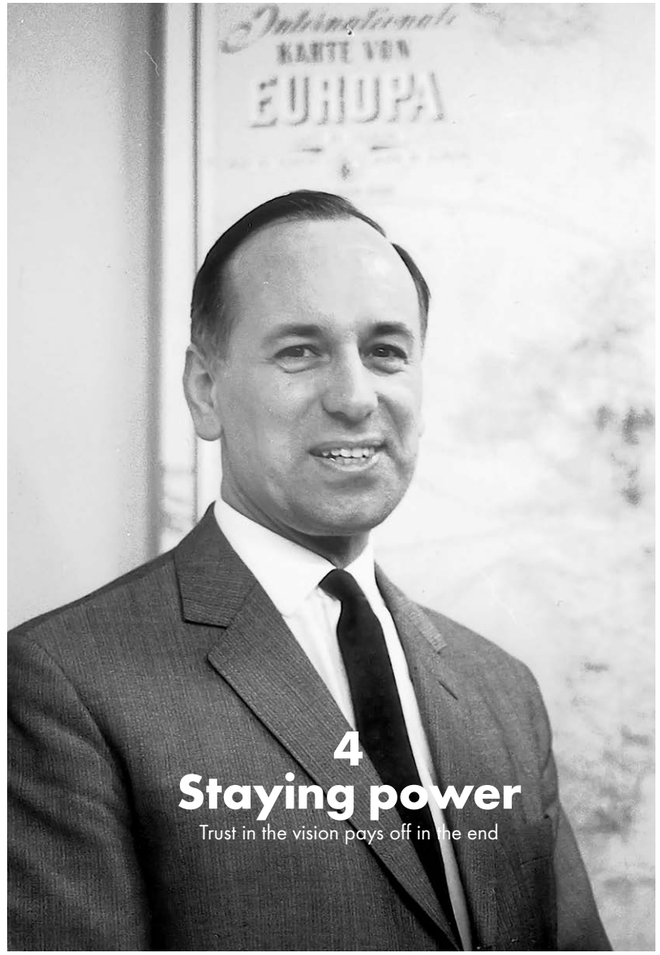

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Trust in the vision pays off in the end

12 Measuring is the key

Locating danger points quickly, or even preventing them – with state-of-the-art measurement technology

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vetropack

Innovation and efficiency

Dear Readers,

In a difficult market environment, consistent investment in the future and continuous development are critically important. Our smart factory approach at Boffalora shows that innovation, as one of our five strategic pillars, is the backbone of our strategy. At our new Italian plant, we are boosting efficiency as well as protecting the environment. Technological advances offer tremendous advantages not only in production, but also in terms of safety.

One difficult but necessary step is the closure of our glass production at St-Prex. This plant can look back on a long and proud tradition – but for some years, it has been impacted by location and profitability problems. It was not easy for us to reach this decision, and our overriding goal has always been a fair social plan for all employees affected by this step.

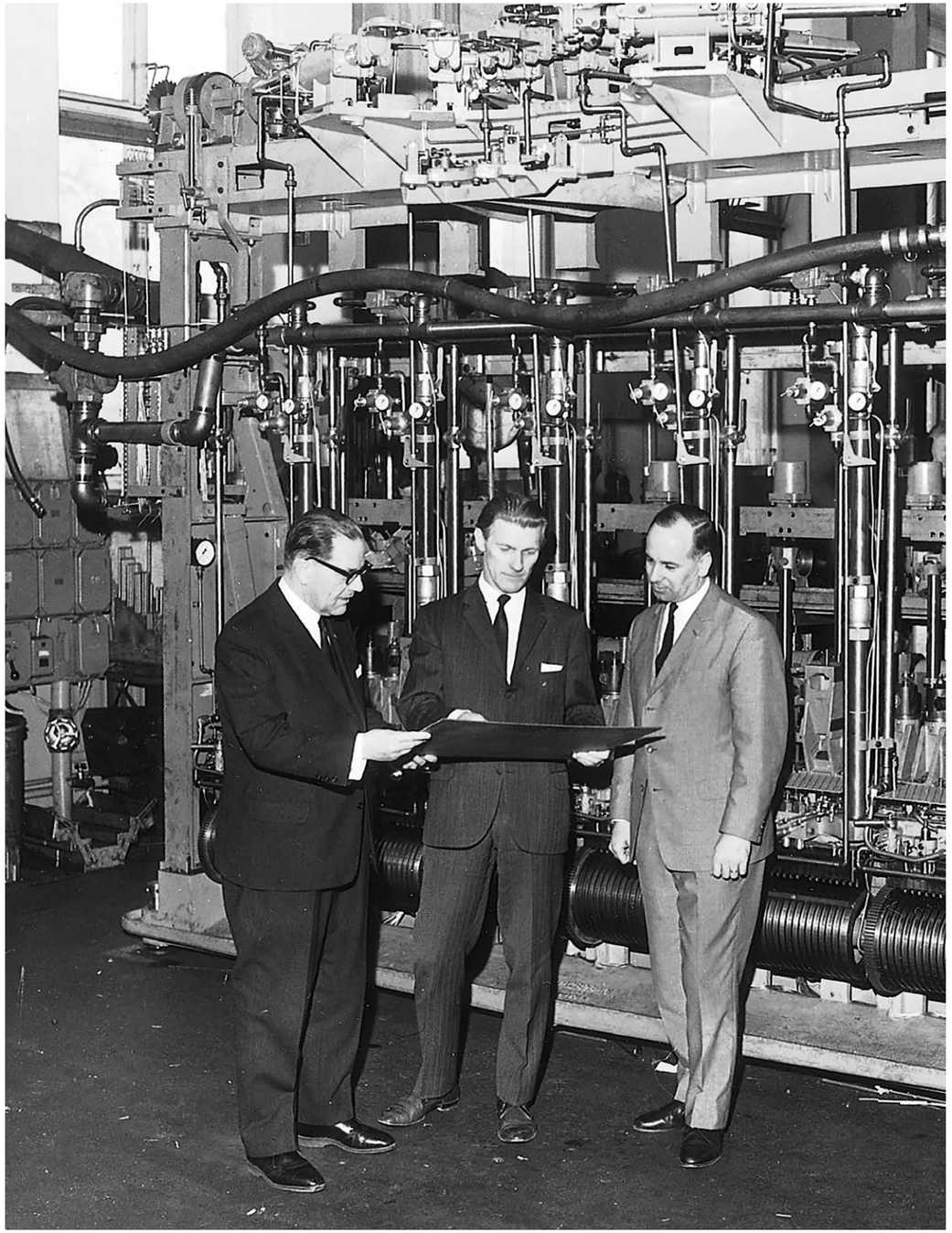
After many decades of research, we have developed returnable glass bottles that combine higher resilience with lower weight. At the same time, they can be refilled more often. In this issue, we're turning the spotlight on the origins of our revolutionary thermal tempering process – which was recently honoured with a WorldStar Award. This spring, moreover, we are joining with Gösser and Brau Union to present a standard returnable bottle solution based on the new process.

Sustainable success cannot be achieved without innovation. That's why we're working at full speed on various projects in our Innovation Centre – we offer you a rare opportunity for an exciting look behind the scenes there. Another innovative feature is the new tagging system on our website: this uses hashtags (#) to link new posts to key issues and locations, so visitors will benefit from deeper insights. As an alternative, visitors can subscribe to our new Vetropack Newsletter.

As well as all these initiatives, we are continuing our active efforts to drive the circular economy ahead: we are cooperating with the European Container Glass Federation (FEVE), the Croatian food manufacturer Podravka Inc., and the Croatian municipal service provider Komunalac d.o.o. on a pilot project to explore how we can consistently motivate consumers to recycle glass packaging.

Guided by our clear strategic direction and our continuous focus on innovation and efficiency, we are well equipped to overcome the challenges that lie ahead. We would like to thank our customers and partners for your trust and support, and we look forward to sharing yet more successes with you going forward.

Johann Reiter
CEO, Vetropack Group



Michel Cornaz (right) has played an active part in the glass industry throughout his long life. After graduating from ETH Zurich, he worked for Emhart Glass in the USA.

In focus The early days of a vision

Staying power

A unique innovation on the market: the world's first returnable bottle made of tempered lightweight glass. This breakthrough is the outcome of decades of research. One witness to this story is Michel Cornaz, now aged 95.

Photo, right: Michel Cornaz took on responsibility for developing Emhart Glass's business activities in Europe and Asia from his base in Zurich. He worked at Emhart Glass for no less than 42 years, and was President of the whole group of companies from 1988 until 1994. Photo below, left to right: Richard Fritschi, Member of the Vetropack Board of Directors; Johann Reiter, CEO of the Vetropack Group; Michel Cornaz, one of the original developers, with the first thermally tempered returnable bottles.

Innovator Michel Cornaz

Michel Cornaz has played an active part in the glass industry throughout his life – just like his brothers Raymond Cornaz (the father of Claude Cornaz) and Jean-Daniel Cornaz. After gaining his degree in chemical engineering from the Federal Institute of Technology (ETH) in Zurich, Michel Cornaz went to the USA in 1952. His intention was to spend a year working in the glass container industry and getting to know the latest process technologies. He started out at Emhart Glass Inc., a leading American manufacturer of production plants for the glass industry based at Hartford, Connecticut. Instead of the year he had originally planned, Michel Cornaz stayed in the USA for a full six years: at Emhart Glass Inc., he worked in development, production, and the sales force for production plants. He then moved to Zurich, where he took on responsibility for developing the company's business activities in Europe and Asia. By the end of his career, Michel Cornaz had worked at Emhart Glass for no less than 42 years. In the last six years before he retired, from 1988 until 1994, he was President of the whole group of companies (known since 1998 as Bucher Emhart Glass). As well as supporting the evolution of Emhart Glass into an international organisation with seven sites, Michel Cornaz set up training centres and developed advisory services. As Chairman of Cornaz-AG Holding, he also guided the development of the Vetropack Group.

In this function, together with his brothers Raymond and Jean-Daniel (who had joined Glashütte Bülach Ltd. and formed Vetropack Ltd in 1966), he steered the Vetropack Group's eastward expansion – which was successfully implemented by Raymond and Jean-Daniel Cornaz.

Michel Cornaz can draw on decades of experience in the international glass industry, and his knowledge of its evolution is virtually unique. And since day one, he has also followed the development – which began with a collaboration partnership between Vetropack and Bucher Emhart Glass.

The early days

"Vetropack and Emhart Glass launched the 'Hard Glass' research project back in 2011, without any major formalities," he recalls. "From the earliest days, the aim was to produce weight-reduced, reusable brown beer bottles," Michel Cornaz explains. To enable mass production, the researchers sought out ways of integrating the tempering process for the bottles into the production process. But because the bottles had to travel such a long distance from the production line to the annealing lehr, they did not reach a sufficiently high average temperature to allow further processing in the proper way. "Emhart's idea was to install a heatable feeder," Michel Cornaz continues. "This device was intended to transport evenly preheated bottles into the annealing lehr for further processing."

Perseverance pays off

Unfortunately, the research project was discontinued within Emhart Glass for cost reasons at that time. Michel Cornaz recalls that the company shied away from the large investment that it would have required. He regrets that the research project was not continued on a joint basis back then – but today, he is all the more pleased that Vetropack continued to pursue the project independently and invested in the advanced technology. He firmly believes that the earlier research project was key to paving the way for the innovative technology: "The practical experience gained from the project gave us the initial boost," he notes.

"Vetropack has earned my highest respect by successfully taking this step."

Michel Cornaz

Excellence in packaging: lightweight returnable glass bottle from Vetropack receives WorldStar Award

The World Packaging Organisation has presented Vetropack's lightweight, returnable bottles with a WorldStar Award in the "Packaging Materials & Components" category. But it was not only the jury who were impressed by the robust yet lightweight bottles: following their debut at the Mohrenbrauerei brewery, they have now become a standard solution for the Austrian brewing industry and are in widespread use on the market.

"We have been researching our process for almost ten years. I am proud and very grateful to the team at our Innovation Centre for the excellent result," emphasises Johann Reiter, CEO of Vetropack. Last year, the lightweight glass bottles had already won in two categories at the Swiss Packaging Awards, qualifying them to participate in the WorldStar Awards.

Since first using thermally tempered returnable bottles in the pilot project, Mohrenbrauerei has expanded the range of beers available in this type of packaging. Vetropack has continued to develop the lightweight bottles and made them accessible to a wider user group. In Austria, returnable bottles have been introduced as an environmentally friendly standard solution for the local brewing industry.

More about the award:
www.vetropack.com/worldstar-award

"As with all inventions, of course, you also need people who are persistent and interested – in this case, people willing to investigate whether the existing annealing lehrs could be used." Every step taken along the path – such as the results achieved, and the high quality of the smaller bottles and the lightweight glass – generated positive impetus and opened the way to the next stage of the journey. Michel Cornaz believes that this staying power is crucial: "There have always been people of vision in the glass industry. Whatever ideas they had, they would keep on trying them out – and they simply wouldn't give up," he recalls. In his view, this is how Vetropack has built up such a huge stock of know-how in recent years, and why the company is now benefiting from its expertise and its pioneering role as it responds to market demand for lighter and reusable glass containers.

The 0.33-litre returnable bottle is now the standard solution for Austria's brewing industry. In Michel Cornaz's opinion, this is nothing short of a breakthrough.

"Vetropack has earned my highest respect by successfully taking this step," he comments. He's visibly pleased about this success, and as he points out: "It encourages us to continue along this path, and to take the next steps by refining the method and integrating it into the process." Because experience has certainly taught him one lesson: "You have to keep on trying things out!"

That's exactly what our colleagues at Vetropack Austria are focusing on: for example, Erich Jaquemar and his team have carried out in-depth tests on coordinating the design of the bottles and crates: the aim here is to reduce damaging effects throughout the value chain as the new lightweight bottles are circulated for re-use. And our colleagues at the Innovation Centre in Pöchlarn are continuing to develop production, one step at a time.

Weight loss made easy

'Organic is what matters now' – that's a rough translation of the slogan used by Austria's Gösser brewery to promote its first organic beer. The Gösser brand can look back on a long and rich tradition – and now, its Gösser Biostoff Lager is set to enter a growing market. The new beer comes with an appropriate sustainable brand identity thanks to 0.33-litre returnable bottles produced with Vetropack's innovative technology, together with a new crate design. At 210 grams, the bottle weighs 30 percent less than conventional standard bottles.

In focus Gösser backs returnables

The design of the practical crate is perfectly matched to the new standard bottles.

More modern – fresher – and younger: Gösser Biostoff Lager aims to be exactly the beer that growing numbers of consumers want to drink. According to GfK (the Society for Consumer Research), no less than 60 percent of Austria's beer drinkers feel that the existing choice of organic beers is not adequate. Teresa Höfler, Senior Brand Manager at Brau Union, comments: "That comes as no surprise to us. Generation Z in particular – consumers aged between 20 and 28 – are self-critical as regards their consumption habits, and they focus on sustainability. And the picture is similar for members of Generation Y, who place more emphasis on enjoyment: they see mindful consumption as an intrinsic aspect of their own attitude. At the same time, purchasers in this segment like to try out new products that fit with their modern lifestyle."

As an innovative beer brand, Gösser therefore intends to do all the more to satisfy these market requirements going forward. From the earliest days, Gösser has always firmly believed that its beer is not only the best *from* nature – but also the best *for* nature. The brand's roots go all the way back to the year 1000, when Countess Adula founded a convent where the nuns brewed beer – a customary practice at that time. In 1860, Max Kober revived the old monastic brewery in the Styrian town of Leoben, laying the foundations for Gösser's breathtaking development into the largest beer brand in the Alpine republic.

Nowadays, Gösser is part of Brau Union Österreich, which in turn has belonged to the Heineken Group since 2003. The brewery sets great store by using high-quality ingredients and adhering to traditional brewing methods. This has enabled the company to achieve what only a few others have managed to do: it combines the traditional with the modern, and has always continued to develop while safeguarding its roots. Gösser is taking the next step along this path with its new organic beer.

Organic beer in an innovative returnable bottle

"The new product's appearance also reflects this step," Höfler explains. "One of Gösser Biostoff Lager's most convincing attributes is its unique recipe. With its vibrant golden-yellow colour and fine aromatic malt tones, it is excitingly tangy and drinkable. Made from 100 percent Austrian organic raw materials, this beer combines sustainability with enjoyment in an innovative 0.33-litre returnable bottle." As she points out, Gösser Biostoff Lager is being launched on the market in the new lightweight returnable standard bottle which, at the same time, plays its part in helping to achieve the refill quota that has been mandatory in Austria since 2024. The trailblazing process involves thermal tempering of the glass bottles to make them exceptionally resilient – as well as reducing their weight. "This technology opens the way for efficient production of more robust standard bottles that are also lighter in weight. They are ideal for use as returnable containers thanks to their many convincing advantages – they score high on sustainability, convenience, stability and simpler logistics," says Erich Jaquemar, Strategic Account Manager for Vetropack in Austria.

Sustainability is a reality

These attributes make the bottle ideal for conveying the brand essence of the new organic beer. "Sustainability is at the core of the Gösser brand, which hails from the green countryside of Styria", Höfler notes. "For example, we brew Gösser beer with renewable energy from our in-house biogas plant, and we already began using recycled paper for the labels a long time ago. A standard returnable bottle solution now offers an alternative to the established non-returnable glass containers, with comparable weight – and this opens up huge opportunities to become even more sustainable."

The idea of a returnable standard bottle for joint use by various breweries has already been around for a long time on the Austrian beer market. But as the issue of sustainability gained importance for consumers, pressure grew to turn the idea into reality. This raised the question as to which bottle would be suitable. Brau Union Österreich has already been collaborating with Vetropack for many years. "As far as glass packaging is concerned, Vetropack is a reliable partner," says Dietmar Roher, Quality Expert at Brau Union. So naturally, great interest was aroused when Vetropack learned of the search for a suitable returnable bottle and presented the new technology to Brau Union.

Standard returnable bottle is a milestone for Austria

"Of course, the aim was to find a solution that other breweries could also accept," Roher continues. A working group set up within the Austrian logistics association for reusable packaging (Logistikverbund Mehrweg) has been focusing on the technical feasibility of the future system.

"Made from 100 percent Austrian organic raw materials, this beer combines sustainability with enjoyment in a 0.33-litre returnable bottle."

Gösser Biostoff Lager is the first Austrian beer to be launched on the market in the new standard bottles. Produced with the new technology, this bottle plays its part in achieving the refill quota which has been mandatory in Austria since 2024. The bottle cuts CO_2 emissions to one quarter – as well as ensuring greater stability.

For more success stories, visit:
www.vetropack.com/en/products-services/success-stories/

The shape of the bottle had to meet several requirements: it had to be suitable for people to insert in standard reverse vending machines (RVMs); the product needed to be identifiable as a returnable bottle, and it also had to be suitable for a variety of crate formats. "The trade, the brewing industry and the service providers then reached agreement on a 0.33-litre returnable bottle. This marked a milestone for the Austrian beer market," Roher sums up. Other countries already have a standard solution in place for parts of the returnable system – and Austria can now make up some ground here.

30 percent lighter – and CO_2 emissions cut to one quarter

The 0.33-litre returnable standard bottle was developed in collaboration with Vetropack. It is a convincing innovation in many different respects: at 210 grams, the bottle weighs 30 percent less than conventional standard bottles. Less weight means easier handling and fewer CO_2 emissions.

"Our development work didn't only focus on the individual bottle – we also considered reusable packaging as a system", says Jaquemar. "What that means is that the designs of the bottles and crates, as well as the pallets and the logistics, are all coordinated with one another. Six rows of crates can be transported on each pallet instead of five in the past." One standard pallet therefore has enough room for 96 crates. Overall CO_2 emissions are reduced to as little as one quarter in comparison to conventional non-returnable containers. This is due not only to savings on logistics, but also to the high share of recycled glass in raw glass production.

At the same time, extensive tests have proven the standard bottle's stability. "Because there is less wear on the contact surfaces, the re-usage rate is about 20 percent higher than for conventional containers. The bottle is stable – so the advantages it offers aren't just ecological," Jaquemar continues. Bottling of the new Gösser Biostoff Lager already began some time ago. The new organic beer reached the market on 11 March – as the first Austrian beer to be available in the innovative standard bottles, delivered in practical 12-bottle crates. More brands are set to adopt Vetropack's lightweight bottle in the near future. And meanwhile, Gösser is responding to the requirements of young consumers in particular – by offering a modern, organic beer in a new sustainable packaging.

Measuring is the key

Glass breakage on the filling line is nothing short of a nightmare for companies in the food and beverage sector. That's why Vetropack is helping its customers to locate danger points rapidly – and, in the best-case scenario, to prevent them altogether.

Michael Waltl, Technical Customer Service Manager at Vetropack Austria, helps customers to optimise their filling lines.

In this interview, Michael Waltl of Vetropack's Technical Customer Service explains how an in-line sensor identifies danger points with utmost accuracy, and he outlines emerging developments in this field.

Mr Waltl: You're making use of a sensor at the sites of various Vetropack customers. So what's this all about?
That's right. We're equipping a dummy that we manufacture ourselves with the ShockQC in-line sensor from the Masitek company of Canada. It provides high-precision measurements of impact loads that act on a glass container. So – there on the spot in our customers' plants – we can determine where filling lines or other packaging processes need to be optimised to prevent glass breakage.

How did you come to work with this methodology and the Masitek sensor?
I'm responsible for Technical Customer Service at Vetropack. This means that my team and I mainly deal with complaints, which in rare cases also relate to glass breakage. No matter where these breakages occur, they present an urgent problem for the customer. When we're tracking down the root cause, it's an advantage to have a measuring system that enables us to identify weak points on the filling line rapidly. That's because the precise place where the containers are being damaged is often not visible to the naked eye. After looking at two suppliers, we quickly decided in favour of Masitek because their product best matched our needs.

Presumably there are developments on the market that make technologies such as these increasingly necessary?
Yes, you could say that. Firstly, lightweight glass bottles are becoming more and more popular as an environment-friendly packaging alternative, as they are more appealing to consumers and they save significantly on resources. But they require different settings in the filling line. And secondly, more products are being filled at high speed. Many filling lines operate at speeds of over 50,000 bottles per hour. These high speeds lead to higher loads on the line. Of course, filling lines have also changed completely over the years. Higher speeds can be achieved far better thanks to modern technologies. But even so, excessive loads do sometimes occur.

You're also using the sensor to help with line settings for new products. Which customers have you been able to help already? The introduction of the tempered lightweight glass bottle is certainly a major factor here, isn't it?
Of course. In some cases, we take the sensor to customers who are filling a new product in a particular container for the first time. In these situations, we use the sensor to identify points on the line that still need to be optimised. Then there are other cases where we go to customers because a specific problem has arisen. We've been operating the sensor since

The sensor inserted in the dummy registers potential danger points for the glass container in the line.

“Every glass article responds to loads differently – and that’s why we replicate each of our customers’ glass products exactly.”

Michael Waltl, Technical Customer Service Manager

2020, and so far we've used it at ten or twelve companies that manufacture very different products. They include beer brewers such as Gösser, who have just launched their new organic beer on the market in the standard lightweight glass bottle, but I've also taken the sensor to companies in the food sector, for example. One case involved spice jars, and another customer produces savoury spreads.

How exactly does the sensor work? Can you give us an idea of the procedure?
We work with a 'replica' – a dummy made of plastic. Every glass article responds to loads differently – and that’s why we replicate each of our customers’ glass products exactly. Then, the replica is calibrated at Masitek and fitted with the sensor. We have sensors in three different sizes. We take the replica to the customer, and then we let this dummy travel along the line. The sensor measures exactly where forces are acting on the container – in the shoulder or base area, for example. It also measures the force levels, in IPS (inches per second). That tells us whether the minimum impact strength for a container produced by us is being exceeded. The measured datasets are transmitted no less than 100,000 times per second to a PC for evaluation.

Do you get the replicas from Masitek?
No. With just a few exceptions, the replicas are produced in our own training workshop. All the cylindrical shapes are replicated there. The only shapes we can't produce ourselves are the non-round formats. As well as saving us a lot of money, this is also good training for our apprentices.

What feedback have you received from your customers so far?
For our customers, of course, the data measured with the dummy provides valuable information. They can use it as the basis for reducing glass breakage or preventing it altogether. And news of the tests with the in-line sensor has spread throughout the industry since we began using it. This has resulted in major customers approaching us as well. For example, I'll soon be travelling to a beer bottler in the Czech Republic for a line audit aimed at detecting potential danger points.

How do you see the future of this technology? Is there still untapped potential here?
Well, apart from the three sensor sizes I mentioned, another very small sensor is currently under development. This is going to be interesting, because it would enable us to examine very small containers at even higher speeds. Other topics are accumulation pressure and top-load measurements. In some plants, for example, there are accumulation tables where the articles are accumulated for various reasons. Certain sensors can measure the accumulation pressure that arises. 'Top-load control' is about the strength of axial forces acting on the capping system when it’s being tested. But the impact measurement is by far the most important parameter, and here we have all the data we need for the analysis.

Customers certainly benefit enormously from this addition to the range of technical customer services.
Precisely. Thanks to the ShockQC in-line sensor from Masitek, we now have a measuring system that identifies danger points with utmost accuracy. This is a huge difference from the past, and it's an enormous help for us – and, of course, for our customers too.

Many thanks for this interview, Mr Waltl.

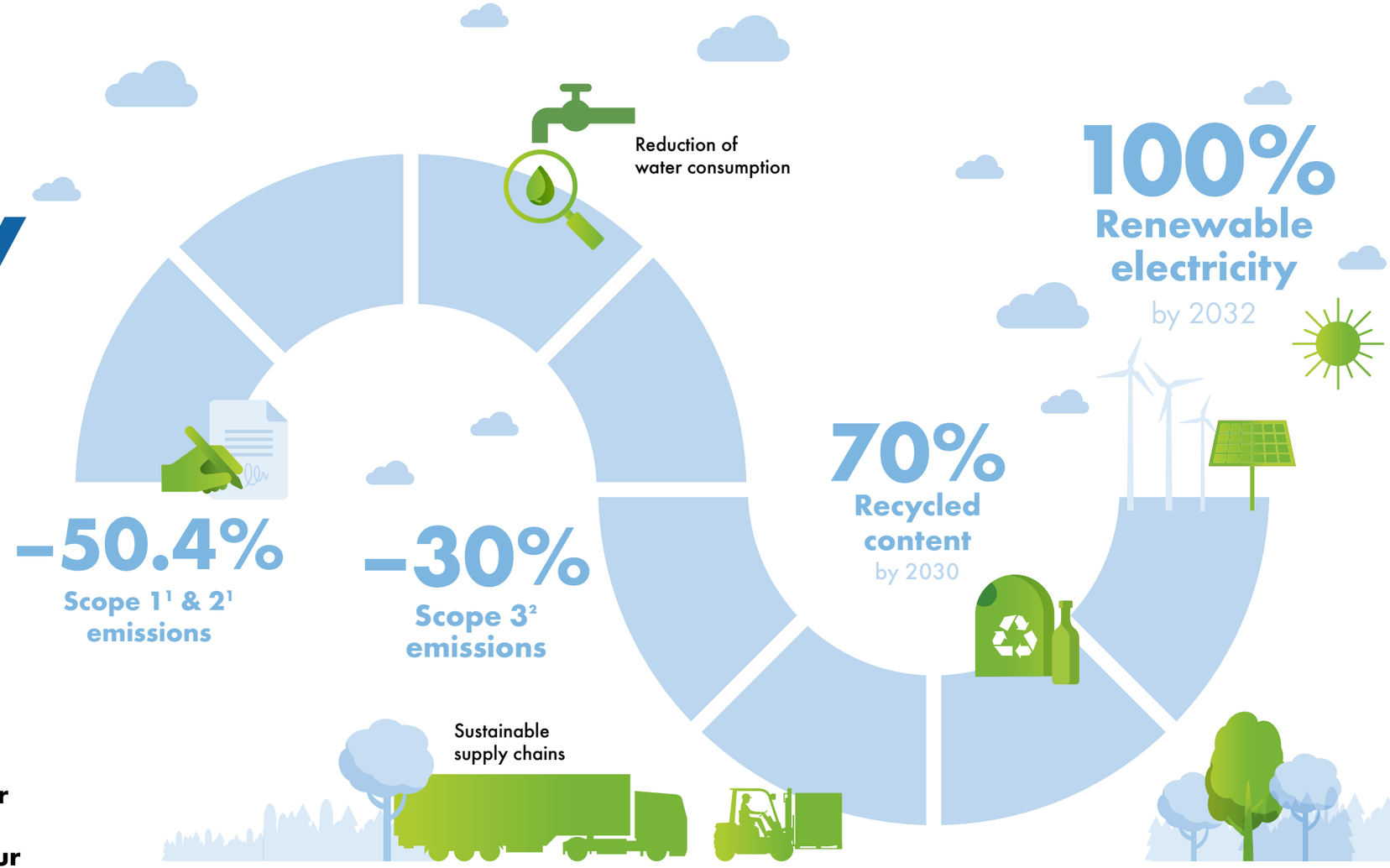
Would you like to take advantage of this service?
Then contact Michael Waltl directly:
michael.waltl@vetropack.com

Our responsibility

Vetropack submits CO_2 reduction targets to the Science Based Targets initiative

Nicolas Lootens, Group Sustainability Manager: "By defining our goals in line with the Science Based Targets initiative, we are now taking an important step in this direction."

The Vetropack Group has submitted specific targets for reducing its CO_2 emissions to the Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi). By 2032, we are planning to reduce our Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions by 50.4 percent, and to cut our Scope 3 emissions by 30 percent.



[1] Absolute reduction by 2032 compared to 2021 (submitted to the SBTi for validation, April 2024)
[2] Emissions from external processes

Our commitment to sustainability
We announced our commitment to the SBTi back in 2022. Our current emission reduction targets are based on 2021 as the reference year. Scope 1 emissions are direct emissions from our own production, while Scope 2 comprises indirect emissions caused by the electricity we purchase. Scope 3 emissions result from processes outside the company but related to our production and operations.

Nicolas Lootens, our Group Sustainability Manager, highlights the urgency of taking action: "Climate change is already a reality, and it's our responsibility to play our part in overcoming the climate crisis. By defining our goals in line with the Science Based Targets initiative, we are taking an important step in this direction."

Our emission reduction strategies
We are implementing a variety of measures to reduce our Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions. These include repairs to existing furnaces and construction of new ones so we can make more efficient use of natural gas, along with technical innovations such as hybrid furnaces. Other measures that give us major leverage include increasing the share of recycled glass in production to 70 percent by 2030, and switching over to 100 percent renewable energies by 2032. Our investments in photovoltaic systems in Austria, Croatia and Italy also underscore our commitment.

To lower our Scope 3 emissions, we are focusing on reductions in several categories: purchased goods and services, capital goods, activities related to energy and fuel, and also upstream transportation and distribution. Innovative approaches such as the 'No Soda Trials' and the use of recycled film for packaging are key factors here.

Forward-looking technologies
We are researching Carbon Capture and Storage technologies that will enable us to store or utilise the CO_2 emissions given off during the glass production process. Mineralisation of the CO_2 from the process gas could supply new raw materials for glass production and other industrial processes.

About the Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi)
The SBTi enables companies to set ambitious emission reduction targets based on the latest climate science. The initiative aims for companies around the world to halve their emissions by 2030 and reach the SBTi's Net-Zero Standard by 2050.

Johann Reiter, CEO of our Vetropack Group, emphasises how important this is: "By defining our goals, we are taking a major step in charting our future course. It is our responsibility to promote sustainable practices and innovative solutions."

With these ambitious targets and actions, Vetropack is showing that sustainability and business success can go hand in hand. Together, we are setting new standards in the glass industry and playing an active part in the global movement to protect the climate.

#Sustainability
www.vetropack.com/en/sustainability/

Bike for Health

Our health and environment initiative: discover the beauty of cycling

In collaboration with the HR Department, a bike outing is organised twice each year for all colleagues who are interested. The most recent outing took riders to the Osypané břehy natural attraction, and then on to Bzenec.

Physical activity is an important factor in a healthy lifestyle. At Vetropack Moravia Glass and Vetropack Nemšová, we aim to motivate our employees to adopt a more active way of life. By launching our Bike for Health challenge, we want to encourage them to cycle to and from work – and also to go biking in their leisure time.

From May until October, participants in the challenge can collect kilometres by cycling so they can win prizes.

To record the number of kilometres they ride, we're using an app called 'EPP – Pomáhej pohybem'. With the app, employees can use the kilometres they've covered to support various projects. This gives them two good reasons to hop on their bikes: cycling is good for their own health, and it also helps to support charitable projects.

The Bike for Health campaign is an expanded version of the earlier Bike to Work initiative which was staged at our glassworks in Kyjov and Nemšová during the summer months of the last two years. The aim: to encourage our employees to swap their car or bus for a bike, as a way of doing something for their own health and for the environment. This year, we've adapted the rules to encourage even more employees to join in. It doesn't matter where people go on their bikes – cycling itself is the objective.

Cycling is far more than a way of getting around on two wheels. It's also a wonderful opportunity to discover the beauty of nature, keep fit, and experience a unique sensation of freedom.

Our star bikers – Vetropack colleagues who are committed to cycling – share their enthusiasm for this mode of transport:

Sonia Kroupová rides her bike three times a week, both to keep fit and to explore new places. Her most memorable experience? In the bike park at Rokytnice nad Jizerou.

Edita Neusarová uses cycling to keep herself fit, to visit interesting places – and to have fun. She also uses her bike for small errands.

Stanislav Bálka cycles into the vineyards between spring and autumn. He appreciates travel by bike because it's environment-friendly, and he prefers the pace of cycling to walking or driving a car. His favourite route takes him through picturesque spots such as Velké Bílovice and Mikulov, and he often stops off at 'U Ferdinanda' – his favourite pub.

#Teamwork
www.vetropack.com/en/teamwork/

Planting for the future

To mark Earth Month in April, Vetropack Chișinău planted 2,500 acacia trees in the Moldovan village of Iordanovca. This campaign aims to combat soil degradation and promote ecological health. Around 50 enthusiastic employees, together with their families, volunteered to get involved in this charitable project. During the same period, Vetropack Chișinău also staged an art competition to raise the younger generation's awareness about recycling and environmental protection.

Vetropack Chișinău has launched a large-scale tree-planting initiative to support and promote our company's environmental, social and governance principles. To mark Earth Month, the company committed to plant at least 50 trees. On one day – despite the hot weather – the particpants planted around 2,500 acacia trees in the village of Iordanovca, which is threatened by soil degradation and landslides. The participants came together for a supper to celebrate the successful completion of this communal planting campaign.

The local government supported the initiative and praised the communal commitment to environmental protection. Business Unit Manager Boris Crivoi declared: "Planting a wood or a forest is an inval- uable investment in a greener and safer future. This project will bring about long-term improvements to the environment and the quality of life for Moldova's citizens. We are delighted that the Vetropack Chișinău team has put this worthy initiative into practice in the village of Iordanovca."

Trees are extremely important for the ecosystem. They clean the air, they provide habitats for wild animals, and they play their part in making the environment more healthy. With every tree we plant, Vetropack is taking a step towards a greener future. Earth Month reminds us of our responsibility to protect the environment. The team undertook this project successfully in collaboration with the experts from Moldsilva, the central forestry administration body in Moldova. Here at Vetropack, we are constantly working to reduce our ecological footprint and to preserve the environment for future generations.

As well as the tree-planting campaign, Vetropack organised an art competition for employees' children. The theme – 'Healing the Planet! Recycling' – inspired the young particpants to demonstrate their talents and their commitment to sustainability: an excellent way for them to get to grips with the topic of recycling at an early age.

St-Prex

Production shutdown initiated at the end of June

Photo (above): What began in 1911 as the artisanal 'Verrerie de St-Prex' glassworks in the heart of Switzerland's Vaud wine-growing region has grown into an international group under the Vetropack name. Photo (right): The last bottle to be produced at St-Prex leaves the line in 2024.

Vetropack is closing its long-established plant in St-Prex – despite investments of millions and an intensive review of all alternatives. The high operating costs and lack of competitiveness make a profitable future for the site impossible.

The Verrerie de St-Prex, a traditional Swiss glassworks, has a long and eventful history. Founded in 1911 by Henri Cornaz, it has made a name for itself for over a century with exquisite glassware and is considered the birthplace of the Vetropack Group.

The closure of the St-Prex plant was announced in May. This decision was taken by the Board of Directors after a thorough examination of alternative proposals put forward by employee representatives. Two months earlier than planned, an orderly shutdown of production had to be initiated at the end of June for safety reasons.

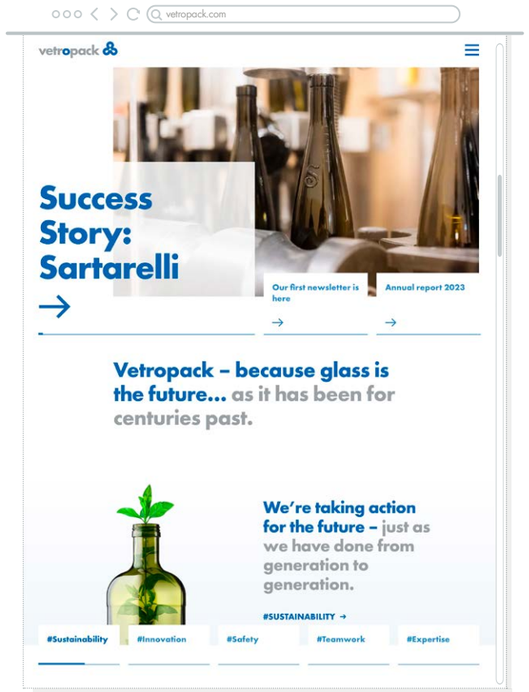
"We did not take this decision lightly, and we examined all proposals submitted to us regarding the future development of the site very comprehensively and in detail," explains Claude Cornaz, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Vetropack Group. "However, we always came to the same conclusion: the future prospects of the St-Prex plant remain negative in terms of profitability and competitive edge – even with an investment running into the millions. Profitable operation would not be possible in the long term. The closure of production is therefore unavoidable."

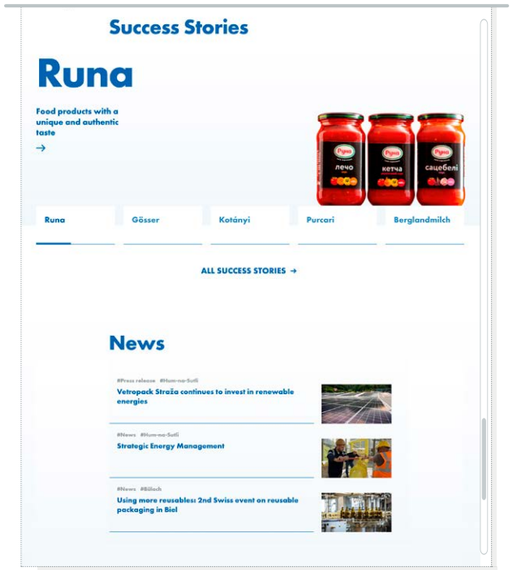
The St-Prex production site, which is over a hundred years old, has undergone numerous modifications and has benefited from major investments over the decades. Despite these efforts, the Vetropack Group's only Swiss production site suffers from its small size and lack of competitiveness.

Glass packaging manufactured at St-Prex cannot be competitive in the European core markets because operating costs for production remain at the same high level. For this reason, a consultation process on the future of the site was already launched at the start of March.

The closure of the plant in St-Prex does not mean that Vetropack is withdrawing from its home market of Switzerland, Johann Reiter emphasises: "Our company headquarters will remain in Bülach going forward. We will continue our commitment to glass recycling in cooperation with our Swiss partners at local level. So, in terms of recycling, everything will continue as in the past."

Vetropack's attractive new website





In February of this year, Vetropack – as a tradition-conscious company with an eye to the future – launched a new website. Our focus is on sustainability, innovation, safety and teamwork.

Simone Koch, Group Communications Director, explains: "Our new website should not only look modern and offer new functions, but also attract more visitors." We asked ourselves what is important to us and how we want to be perceived.

The goals: not only to fill our customers, investors and potential employees with enthusiasm about our products, but also to show them how Vetropack is drawing on its rich corporate tradition to help shape the future. To achieve these aims, we drafted five promises relating to five topics: Sustainability, Innovation, Safety, Teamwork, and Expertise.

These promises are backed up by stories from our company. For example: visitors to the website can find out why teamwork is so important in production, and gain insights into various teams at and around Vetropack. Alongside insights into our employees' everyday working lives, we present interesting customer projects – plus Vetrotime, our online customer magazine.

An innovative tagging system assigns all posts and articles to the key topics and locations so visitors can access indepth information about sustainability in an enjoyable format. We regularly publish new stories and news – so it's worth checking back frequently. Alternatively, visitors can subscribe to our new Vetropack Newsletter, or find important instructions and documents in the Download Center. Our main menu provides a clear overview of the vast range of content and helps with navigation.

The new website comes across as fresh, modern and uncluttered, with large images and impactful headlines that focus on our products and employees. In short: a successful website that mirrors our engagement in all areas.

Listening to our customers

An interview with Armelle Dupont, Group Customer Experience Manager

You've taken on a new role as Group Customer Experience Manager since December 2023. What is the aim of role, and what issues are you currently working on?
Our vision is to provide the best-in-class Customer Experience in our field. My mission is to regularly capture customer feedback, engage with the whole Vetropack organisation and drive key initiatives to constantly improve the way we serve our customers. I am also leading the team of Strategic account managers and my role is to enable the team to develop our partnerships and sustainably generate value for both parties. In both roles, I deeply enjoy acting as the channel of communication for our customers.

How has last year's customer survey influenced your work? What measures have been introduced?
We continue to invest and reinforce our strengths such as Customer Care. We're currently making use of digital e-training to reinforce a consistent Customer Centricity mind-set throughout the organisation, and we're launching a campaign to promote dialogue with our customers. The aim is to keep customer needs and challenges at the centre of everything we do. We intend to improve by implementing many diverse measures. To this end, we're communicating our sustainability and innovation roadmaps, focusing on the rollout of our improved returnable solution and working to optimise our portfolio.

Where do you see the greatest opportunities for Vetropack in terms of emerging trends or technologies?
Digitalisation opens the way for us to enhance the Customer Experience at every touch point of the journey with Vetropack. We built the necessary foundation this year by providing our Sales team with a great Customer Relationship Management tool, so they spend more quality time with our customers and less on data collection and reporting. I'm also excited to confirm that we will be launching a project to develop a dedicated customer platform: that will give our customers better access to live data, and make it easier for them to get services and give feedback.

Stay tuned!

Drive innovation

We established the Innovation Centre at our site in Pöchlarn (Austria) in 2020. This facility provides physical evidence of the Vetropack Group's strategic innovation efforts. Innovations that impact our products, our processes and our organisation are being driven ahead here at full speed. This is because – now as in the future – Vetropack aims to meet our customers' requirements by developing innovative, environment-friendly products and services of high quality, thus ensuring our long-term business success.

We're staying on the ball Pöchlarn

The Innovation Centre vividly demonstrates that innovation is a highly relevant issue for our company. Under the leadership of Daniel Egger, Group Head of Innovation, the Centre was integrated into our Technology and Production division with effect from January 2022. This organisational change was followed by further expansion, one step at a time. The Innovation Centre in Pöchlarn currently has a workforce of 32 employees. Its structure comprises three units: Process and Technology Innovation, Product and Material Innovation, and Smart Factory Innovation. This rare look behind the scenes reveals exactly what we are researching at this moment in time.

New machine makes bottle tempering more efficient

Vetropack has developed a unique product that is the world's first returnable bottle made of thermally tempered lightweight glass. It is manufactured using a new process, which involves thermal tempering of the glass bottles. Their low weight substantially reduces logistics effort and expense, while the CO_2 emissions per bottle are down to about one quarter of the rate for a normal returnable bottle.

Our goal now is to move nearer towards making this technology ready for industrial use, so we are currently researching a new and even more efficient machine to temper the bottles. A pilot plant to test this redesigned process has already been ordered, and is scheduled to go into production in mid-2024. If the relevant tests proceed as planned, a fully developed version of this machine can be expected as early as the second half of 2025 – leading to a further increase in our production capacities.

Carbon Capture and Utilisation (CCU)

Our Process and Technology Innovation unit is also conducting tests on the use of a promising carbon capture and utilisation technology for the glass industry. This process is known as 'carbon mineralisation', where carbon dioxide is convered into a carbonate. This chemical reaction happens when special rocks are exposed to carbon dioxide. As the carbon dioxide cannot escape back to the atmosphere, this process could be highly interesting for the glass industry – because it could turn CO_2-free glass production into a reality.

'No Soda' production

Vetropack is a member of International Partners in Glass Research (IPGR), a global research organisation that promotes glass science and technology through collaboration between the industry, colleges and universities, and public authorities. Vetropack is conducting trials aimed at changing the raw material input in a furnace that has been taken out of service. As part of the 'No Soda Trials', the mix of raw materials was adapted so as to eliminate the additional use of soda, one of the main sources of CO_2 emissions. The melting behaviour of the mix was examined in a ten-day investigation. The formability of bottles from the soda-free melt was proven successfully at the end of the trial.

Our Product and Material Innovation unit is also focusing intensively on alternative mix compositions – i.e. the recipes that ultimately reach the furnaces – and alternative raw materials.

Seamless traceability thanks to advanced data matrix and RFID technology

In our Smart Factory Innovation unit, we are currently introducing a robust traceability system using data matrix codes. Each bottle is given a unique identifier that captures and stores specific data throughout the entire production process. This makes it possible to detect potential problems at an early stage, and it improves quality control – leading to additional transparency which strengthens customer trust. As another benefit, RFID (Radio-Frequency Identification) technology enables us to identify pallets and check their quantities in real time, so logistics and production efficiency are optimised.

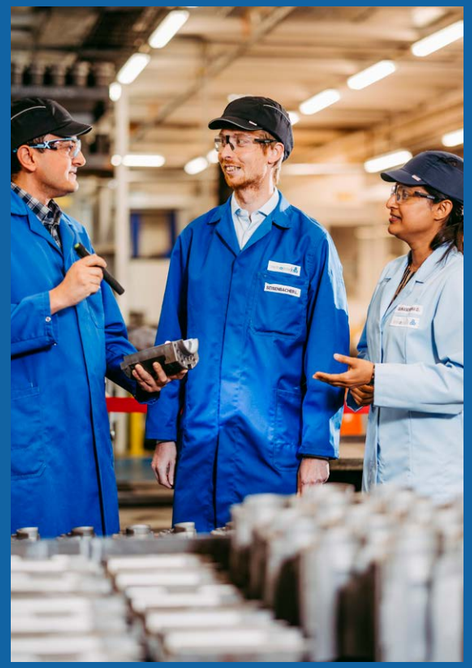
A hot-end laser marks all thermal tempered products with a data matrix code that stores a vast amount of information and opens up some exciting possibilities. In the event of a complaint, for instance, the products involved can be rapidly identified. It also offers advantages for advertising-campaigns and loyalty programmes.

"We aim to achieve high product quality, excellent service and the trust of our customers. At the same time, we ensure that our procurement is efficient and we are committed to a sustainable future."

Daniel Egger, Group Head of Innovation

We're staying on the ball Pöchlarn

At our Innovation Centre in Pöchlarn, we keep on re-inventing one of the oldest materials in the world. The goals that drive us? To make glass even more sustainable, and to make the production processes even more efficient.



RFID technology for pallets is already in use at our Pöchlarn, Straža, Nemšová and Kyjov plants. The solution records data for both incoming and outgoing pallets. Going forward, it will be possible to divert individual pallets to external depalletising zones according to defined criteria, and to ensure the traceability of the pallets with the articles.

Continuing the development of machine vision

Computer vision systems leverage deep learning algorithms to process visual data and extract meaningful information. In a factory environment, this technology can be used to recognize objects, patterns, and anomalies in various segments. Vetropack has identified numerous benefits from utilizing this technology, including improved product quality, enhanced efficiency, and reduced downtime.

At Vetropack, we utilise computer vision for various applications ranging from advanced inspection of products for defects to quality control – always with the aim of ensuring that our products meet the highest standards.

We also use computer vision for article counting, so items are accurately tallied to streamline inventory and production processes. Looking ahead, we see significant potential in expanding the use of this technology. Future possibilities include using computer vision in mould workshops to assist in wear and cleanliness inspections, continuously monitoring the production environment for any irregularities or stoppages to enable quick intervention and minimize downtime, and enhancing warehouse management through improved monitoring and automation. This is just the beginning, and there are many opportunities to continue leveraging computer vision technology at Vetropack.

Digital twins play their part in the digital revolution

This project involves using state-of-the-art technologies such as AI, computer vision, the Industrial Internet of Things (IIoT) and advanced robotics to create digital replicas of for thermal tempering furnaces and testing machines (to name just two examples). These digital twins mirror real-life processes and they open up possibilities for realtime monitoring, simulations and extended data analyses. The benefits: optimised settings, predictive maintenance, and identification of hidden scope for process improvements.

Time after time, Vetropack's relentless research activities continue to position our company at the forefront of intelligent glass packaging. We are excited to see what developments the future will bring.

#Innovation
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From 120 down to 30

Time window management + team spirit = logistics productivity boost

We're staying on the ball Optimised logistics processes

Clear time windows and an ingenious monitoring system have drastically reduced loading times and increased efficiency.

An overcrowded loading area, waiting times of up to five hours for trucks, and forklift drivers with no idea of where to start at peak times: that was the scenario facing the logistics team in Pöchlarn when they began work in 2018.

In fact, the situation was problematic in almost every respect – in terms of cost-effectiveness, capacity and efficiency, not only for Vetropack but also for our freight forwarders; occupational safety for our forklift drivers was another issue; and then there were problems with sustainability and CO_2 emissions resulting from truck waiting times. We've already been using the ELOGATE tool in our logistics at Vetropack for a long time. It includes some impressive functions, one of which is time window management (or TWM). But what does that actually mean in practice?

Forwarders receive a transport order from the dispatcher with a note advising them that a loading time slot must be booked, so they know they have to go to Vetropack. In Phase 1 (which is running at present), the trucks have a time slot of 2.5 hours which they should keep to. If the trucks arrive in Pöchlarn within this time and are registered in the dispatch office, the forklift drivers will see this on their tablets: they can then attend to those trucks as scheduled, and give them priority treatment. This arrangement delivers economic as well as environmental benefits for both sides.

A monitoring system was also designed and introduced for the Pöchlarn site: this aims to make the forwarders aware of TWM performance. We then set up a monthly reporting system on the basis of the monitor. This made it possible to let the forwarders know how the time slots were booked, and whether the timings were adhered to. We held joint meetings with forwarders to develop various improvement strategies – because it's essential for all stakeholder groups to work together so that the tool's functions can really be utilised to full potential. After only a short time, the success of these steps could already be proven: thanks to interaction between the system and a highly functional team, loading times have been reduced from an average of two hours to only 30 minutes. As well as reducing throughput times, TWM is delivering a number of positive side effects:

- A daily loading peak is levelled out, so forklift drivers are relieved of pressure (occupational safety), and the same applies to dispatch office staff.
- Personnel deployment is optimised.
- Truck waiting costs are reduced.
- Productivity is increased, both for Vetropack and for our customers.
- CO_2 emissions are reduced thanks to shorter waiting times.

This is a success story for the whole industry. Our Pöchlarn team has already been able to join forces with the system operator to help other companies overhaul their logistics processes in similar ways.

Digital recycling

We're staying on the ball Recycling

How do you get consumers to consistently recycle the glass packaging they use? Producers in the glass, food, and beverage industries, environmental organisations and governments around the world ask themselves that very question. In the Croatian city of Koprivnica, Vetropack Straža d.d. has teamed up with the European Container Glass Federation (FEVE), Podravka Inc. – a multinational company and one of the country's leading food producers – and local municipal service provider Komunalac d.o.o. in a pilot project that aims to answer this question.

Used glass packaging is a vital resource: re-using it reduces both the consumption of raw materials and the energy required in glass production, as melting down used glass requires less energy. This results in fewer carbon emissions per new container – making it all the more important that recyclable glass actually reaches the recycling cycle. For various reasons, this does not always happen. Infrastructure for glass collection, transport, and recycling may not work as efficiently as it should, or might be inadequate as yet. Additionally, consumers may simply be unaware of the potential of glass recycling or the right way to do it. That's why FEVE is an active partner of Close the Glass Loop – a multi-stakeholder platform where players from the entire value chain come together with the goal of achieving a 90 percent collection rate for glass packaging in the EU by 2030 (current rate: 80.1 percent).

Glass is a natural material that is one hundred percent re-usable with no loss of quality.

The Digital Recycling Pilot Project is an education and awareness-raising campaign targeting consumers. Its aim: to increase the collection and recycling rate in Croatia's glass recycling system.

Building effective partnerships to communicate with consumers and raise their awareness is one of the most important factors that can be leveraged to achieve this goal. "As a European organisation, we depend on local partners like companies and local authorities who can activate their existing networks and infrastructures and draw on their deep knowledge of the situation in their area. In return, we provide them with resources, communication materials and advisory support. We are all working towards the same recycling goal, just from different angles," explains Michael Delle Selve, Head of Marketing and Communications at FEVE.

Local partnerships for sustainable glass recycling

In the Croatian city of Koprivnica, these local partners are Vetropack Straža d.d., food producer Podravka Inc. and the municipal services company Komunalac d.o.o. With the Digital Recycling Pilot Project, a digital campaign designed to educate consumers and raise awareness, they are addressing the challenge of achieving a higher collection and recycling rate in Croatia's glass recycling system: under the Deposit Return Scheme (DRS), a small deposit is paid back to consumers when they return bottles with capacity of 200 ml or more to shops from where private companies collect them. An estimated 80 percent of containers covered by this system are collected for recycling. Glass jars of all sizes and smaller glass bottles, however, are covered by the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) system: they are collected elsewhere in communal containers from which municipal services transport them to recycling plants. Only about 30 percent of all containers with capacity of less than 200 ml are collected under this system. The remaining 70 percent go to waste, dragging the overall national glass collection rate down to 59 percent. Compared to the EU average, this leaves Croatia with significant room for improvement.

The Digital Recycling Pilot Project campaign was launched to investigate what lies behind the lower success rate of the EPR system: lack of motivation because there is no reward (as compared to the DRS system), or lack of awareness about glass recycling in general. It started off with an online survey specifically targeted at the citizens of Koprivnica. Campaign messages were then tailored to address the survey findings, and visual materials were added featuring Podravka's products in glass jars.

Success factors for the glass recycling campaign

Strategic distribution of the campaign images via FEVE's social media channels will start in autumn of this year. Continuous data collection throughout the campaign includes tracking of various factors: for example, which messages, visuals, and channels reached the most consumers, and how this actually influenced glass collection volumes. When the campaign finishes towards the end at approximately the end of the year, this data will be analysed, evaluated, and benchmarked against data collected from Čakovec, a similar city without a campaign of this sort, which serves as a control group. The ultimate outcome will be a communications toolkit and blueprint that can be used for future campaigns, regardless of the country.

While both FEVE and Vetropack Straža provide financial support for this project, each participant contributes to its success in distinct ways: the Vetropack team undertakes a significant portion of the organisational tasks and provides translations for the campaign. As Vetropack Straža d.d. operates the only glass producing plant in the country, its working connections were crucial and instrumental in bringing both Komunalac and Podravka on board in the project. And as the producer of many popular brands, Podravka gives the campaign the visibility it needs. "We immediately recognised the value of this project," says Nataša Mikuš Žigman, Director of Sustainability at Podravka. "We have set ourselves the goal of using only recyclable, returnable or compostable packaging for our products by 2030. Glass can help us fulfil this ambition – and we want to help make sure that the glass we use does get recycled." Komunalac acted as local advisor for the project and provided data support. "We are also ideally positioned to measure the actual impact on the volume of glass we collect for recycling. We're hoping to see a marked increase," says Saša Grubačević, Head of Waste Management Department at Komunalac d.o.o. As well as handling joint project coordination, FEVE designed the communications approach for this project and will ultimately evaluate the data. All four partners hope that the glass recycling rate in Koprivnica will climb significantly, and they look forward to the results of their joint efforts being used for future campaigns in Croatia or abroad.

"We want to help make sure that the glass we use does get recycled."

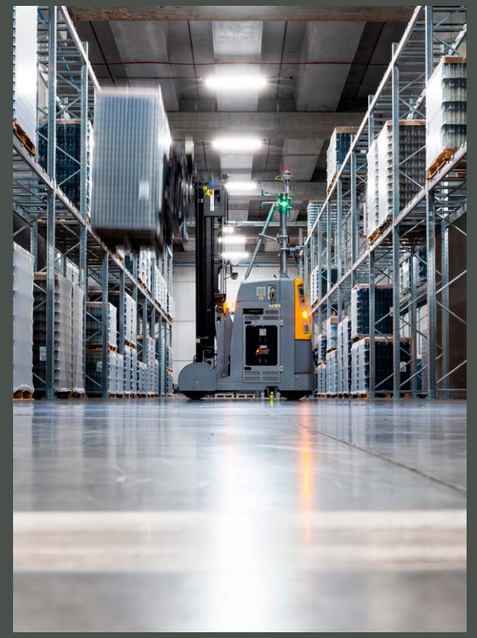
Nataša Mikuš Žigman,
Director for Sustainability at Podravka

#Sustainability
www.vetropack.com/en/sustainability/

No unnecessary movements

It is a glimpse into the future: in Italy, Vetropack is embracing the full potential of a smart factory. At its newly inaugurated manufacturing site in Boffalora sopra Ticino, the state-of-the-art, fully automated warehouse is now operating. Customers benefit from shorter lead times and seamless transparency.

Vetropack has commissioned a fully automated warehouse in its new 340,000 m² plant at Boffalora sopra Ticino.



"All processes at Boffalora are implemented with state-of-the-art technology."

Jaroslav Mikliš, Group Supply Chain Projects and Transformation Manager

The fully automated warehouse is equipped with state-of-the-art technology designed to optimise logistics operations at Vetropack's new site in Italy. It achieves notably higher efficiency in order processing compared to conventional or partially automated warehouses. Thanks to this new system, Vetropack Italia ensures full traceability in real time, enabling immediate responses to any deviations and significantly reduced lead times. Automation also ensures the even distribution of tasks across available time, helping Vetropack avoid bottlenecks and ensure efficient capacity utilisation.

"All processes at Boffalora are implemented with state-of-the-art technology," says Jaroslav Mikliš, Group Supply Chain Projects and Transformation Manager. This includes the logistics, which were planned using simulations. "In a fully automated warehouse, unnecessary movements area thing of the past. At the same time, precise data acquisition enables us to control and monitor processes with exceptional accuracy," Jaroslav Mikliš continues. To ensure smooth operations, the entire system can be remotely monitored.

Maximum safety, more sustainability, no waiting times

Avoiding manual intervention enhances both occupational safety and the quality of secondary packaging: the use of automation technologies and artificial intelligence prevents risky situations as well as damage to secondary packaging. The fully automated warehouse helps Vetropack to achieve its sustainability goals. The entire fleet of vehicles has been equipped with the very latest low-consumption lithium batteries which not only reduce the duration of the charging cycles, but also make the charging process significantly more efficient. "Thanks to our efficient use of the entire area, we are reducing shuttle traffic to other warehouses – and hopefully, we'll soon be able to eliminate it completely," comments Jaroslav Mikliš. The new fully automated warehouse is yet another example of how our ultra-modern, resource-efficient site in Italy is generating a positive impact on the entire Vetropack Group.

#Innovation
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70 years old – and still going strong

No caffeine, purely natural ingredients – and, not least, an exceptional glass packaging: Cockta is today's on-trend soft drink in the Balkans and beyond.

Cockta, the legendary soft drink originating from Slovenia, is soaring to new heights – with support from Vetropack

A unique recipe, natural ingredients – and, not least, exceptional packaging: the Cockta brand is back on track for success since its facelift in 2018. Guests at restaurants, hotels and other outlets can savour Cockta Original, Cockta Free (no sugar) and Cockta Blondie from the high-quality Vetropack glass bottle that is also a key factor in the brand image of this creative soft drink from the Balkans.

The year: 1952. Emerik Zelinka, Professor of Chemistry at the University of Ljubljana, is developing the recipe for a special type of cola. Just one year later comes the market launch of Cockta – which goes on to become the national beverage of the young Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. For decades since then, Cockta has refreshed and delighted generation after generation with a unique secret recipe that includes a cocktail of eleven herbs and caramel, water from a mineral spring, and other natural ingredients.

Cockta, which contains neither caffeine nor orthophosphoric acid, has been produced and marketed by Atlantic Grupa for over a decade. Headquartered in Zagreb, Atlantic Grupa is one of South-East Europe's leading food and beverage manufacturers. Alongside beverages, its portfolio includes savoury spreads (such as Argeta, the pâté brand that has achieved success throughout Europe), coffee, snacks, and confectionery – with oat-based products as part of the new growth business.

Three cornerstones of success: a distinctive recipe based on natural ingredients and the unique glass bottle from Vetropack have made Cockta popular with consumers of all ages.

New design and a unique bottle are keys to renewed success

Laura Bortas, Senior Brand Development Manager at Atlantic, shares responsibility for the Cockta brand with her team. She reports: "In the years after 2010, Cockta increasingly became a 'nostalgia drink', and there were too many short-lived innovations that came at the expense of the brand essence and sales. That's why we embarked on a repositioning in 2018 – to freshen up the brand and deliberately target the younger generation as well. Vetropack played a decisive part here."

The new 275-ml lightweight glass bottle weighing 180 grams is manufactured using the 'narrow neck press and blow' process. Intended for the HoReCa (Hotels, Restaurants, Cafés) channel, it features a distinctive design with some unique elements. For example: the neck of this slender bottle is inspired by rose hip, one of the ingredients in Cockta; smooth areas of the surface alternate with others that resemble orange peel; and the year when Cockta was born is embossed on the bottle. Last but not least, both the unusual label (now restored to the original 1953 colours of yellow and blue) and the special area to accommodate it require specific know-how – not only for the production of the bottles but also for the downstream labelling process. Bortas continues: "We're very glad that our development partner Vetropack has supported us throughout the process as we've worked together to make this unique bottle possible. Far from slowing us down with this venture, Vetropack has actually helped us to fly!" In 2023, Vetropack – as the exclusive supplier of glass packaging for Cockta – has delivered around 22 million glass containers to Atlantic. The HoReCa sector accounts for 28 percent of total Cockta sales; the beverage is distributed far beyond the Balkan region to 24 markets across the globe, including the UK and the USA.

Refreshingly different – and a hit with the young generation

Atlantic was able to boost its sales of Cockta by 42 percent between 2018 and 2022. What's more, the group has succeeded in achieving one of its most important objectives: to appeal to the younger generation. "Vetropack's unique bottle – with its premium look and feel – isn't only important for HoReCa, where first impressions matter most and consumer habits are shaped. It's also a key driver for

Back to the roots: a facelift in 2018 restored Cockta's original 1953 colours of yellow and blue, which also reappear ont he label of the 275-ml lightweight glass bottle from Vetropack.

marketing – you could say it's part of the visual brand essence," Bortas points out.

The two companies share a long tradition, because their predecessor organisations began working together back in 1953 – long before Atlantic Grupa and Vetropack Straža even existed in Croatia. The beginnings of glass production in the Slovenian-Croatian border region date back even further. Goran Vurnek, Sales Representative at Vetropack Straža, takes up the story: "Even in the 19th century, the mineral-rich water containing natural CO_2 from the springs near Rogaška Slatina was already being exported to Vienna and other European destinations; the first bottles for it were produced in Hum na Sutli, where our Vetropack plant is located today."

Strengthening and cautiously expanding the brand essence – thanks to Vetropack

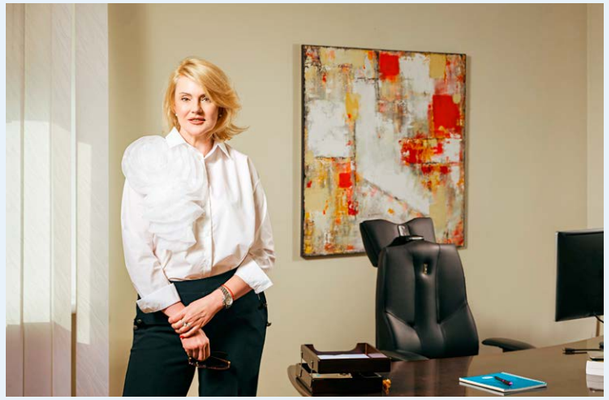
Since 2018, when Cockta made such a splash with its new look ("Cockta Original"), two more offshoots have been added to the range: 2019 saw the introduction of the on-trend "Cockta Free" variant (no sugar), followed in 2021 by "Blondie", also known as the other side of orange – the refreshingly different orange-flavoured drink (orangeade) with the unmistakeable cocktail of herbs. Both products were launched successfully and, of course, both of them are also available in the iconic glass bottle. This has provided Atlantic with an additional mainstay outside of the cola segment in the CSD (carbonated soft drinks) market, which is continuing to grow.

Closing words from Laura Bortas: "We intend to continue building on this strong basis. Our close partnership with Vetropack is very helpful for us here. For instance, our companies' development departments are already in direct contact during the concept phase, so we can clarify what's possible (and what isn't) at an early stage of the design process. So this shared success story is set to continue – expect the unexpected!"

For more success stories
www.vetropack.com/en/products-services/success-stories/

Authentic

From Western Ukraine to Eastern Europe, and throughout the world: natural products in the diverse range offered by Lutsk Foods are an enrichment to every cuisine – and they are supplied in exclusive and sustainable glass packaging from Vetropack. Since summer 2023, the glass containers have once again been delivered directly from Vetropack's site in Ukraine, and there are plans to expand the partnership.



Anna Polishchuk, Chief Operating Officer at Lutsk Foods, is delighted about her company's partnership with Vetropack for the Runa brand.

Are you familiar with satsebeli? It's a special tomato sauce from Georgia, made with tomato paste, onions, paprika and garlic combined with dill, basil and coriander. Or how about adjika? That's a spicy paste from the Caucasus (known in Turkey as acuka), with crushed chilli peppers as its main ingredient. The Lutsk Foods company has set itself the mission of making culinary achievements such as these available throughout the world. Lutsk Foods takes its name from the small city in western Ukraine where it was founded in 1945. Since then, it has developed into a market leader in its own country and beyond. More than 350 employees carefully prepare over 70 unique products which are mainly sold under the Runa and Ridnyi Krai brands – in both Eastern and Western Europe, the USA, Japan, Saudi Arabia and elsewhere.

One of the secrets of the Runa brand is that its products preserve their natural properties: all of them are manufactured without preservatives or food additives. Experienced technologists collaborate with the marketing team to keep on developing the unique recipes for the Runa range. Lutsk Foods' manufacturing facilities were completely modernised between 2008 and 2010, and additional production lines were installed between 2014 and 2016. Since 2019, Lutsk Foods has been collaborating with Vetropack and as of 2021, Vetropack has been supplying an exclusive 430-ml glass container for the Runa brand. The two companies share the same commitment to excellence, sustainable processes, and continuous development.

Special recipes – natural and healthy, with long shelf lives

Anna Polishchuk joined Lutsk Foods in 2010 and she has been the company's Chief Operating Officer since 2021. She reports: "Our collaboration with Vetropack harbours great potential. Glass is the ideal packaging material for us. However, priorities change in times of war: at the moment, the main challenges are to secure people's jobs and maintain the pre-war level." Vetropack operates its own plant at Hostomel in Ukraine. Located to the north-west of Kyiv,

Photo (top): For its regional specialities such as Letcho paprika tomato sauce, Lutsk Foods uses 430-ml glass jars from Vetropack. Photo (right): Before the moulds are used, they are prepared for production, cleaned, polished and inspected.

the glassworks was founded in 1912 and has been owned by Vetropack since 2006. After sustaining serious damage at the end of February 2022, the plant resumed operation at the end of May 2023 with a newly-recruited workforce of 169, consisting mostly of former employees. "We are very happy to have Vetropack Hostomel as a professional supplier located close to us. That's because we also rely on Ukrainian partners for all the other raw materials and components in the supply chain," Polishchuk continues.

Over 90 percent of Lutsk Foods' products are delivered in glass jars that are filled directly on site. As an infinitely recyclable product, glass is exceptionally sustainable and it contains no additives or potentially harmful chemicals. Glass and ceramics also have by far the lowest levels of food contact substances that could accidentally accumulate on the packaging, harbouring health risks that are as yet unresearched. Like Vetropack Hostomel, Lutsk Foods is also certified in accordance with FSSC 22000 – attesting the high level of quality assurance and traceability throughout the value chain. "Our objective is to manufacture safe products of high quality every day – products that meet the high standards set by national and European legislation," Polishchuk emphasises.

Vetropack currently supplies colourless glass jars for 16 different Lutsk Foods products. They include a wide range of special tomato-based sauces, a ketchup for children, and a mayonnaise preparation. These ready-to-consume products contain valuable vitamins and micronutrients, and they are simple to use in cooking. The glass packaging is exceptionally environment-friendly – but that's not all: it also enables thermal treatment, which allows the required sterilisation and completely eliminates the need for any preservatives.

A forward-looking partnership in Ukraine

"Vetropack is the right partner for us, and they also help us to move forward in terms of sustainability," Anna Polishchuk comments. "Thanks to Vetropack's advanced technology and optimised processes, we save huge amounts of CO_2 throughout the entire value chain. That's because we sell our products directly as well as indirectly, and we also serve the hospitality industry and various export markets. Our marketing specialists keep a close watch on the Ukrainian and global markets and, when the time is right, they collaborate with the food technologists to prepare new products – for which we'll be considering more glass packaging products from Vetropack. The situation continues to be challenging, but both our companies are highly quality-conscious, and we are already working on joint plans for the future."

A reliable partner – despite adverse conditions

Every day, our employees at the hot end ensure that glowing glass gobs are turned into glass containers. Here, a jar for Runa is being inspected.

As well as overcoming the challenges presented by the ongoing conflict, Vetropack's plant in Hostomel (Ukraine) is breaking new ground to ensure that both production and the energy supply are continuously secure. Although there has been some loss of market shares, we are resolutely maintaining our existing partnerships and continuing to expand as we prepare for the Ukrainian market to recover. We invite you to take a look behind the scenes of this remarkable success story.

Our team in Hostomel is showing extraordinary resilience and adaptability during difficult times. Despite the ongoing conflict, they have developed innovative solutions in recent months that have enabled the resumption of production, diversification on the market, and guaranteed energy security. Reconstruction work at Hostomel continues to move ahead, and the successful commissioning of a first furnace has largely normalised production even though conditions are difficult. Furthermore, all the preparatory steps have been taken for the commissioning of another furnace so that market shares can be retained – and this will even make it possible to gain new market shares.

Yaroslav Klymenko, Sales Manager at Vetropack Hostomel, is convinced that the market is going to recover. Forecasts by manufacturers of FMCG (Fast Moving Consumer Goods) for 2024 support his belief. Market growth of 10 percent is expected for Ukraine.[1]

Exports continue despite border blockades

We have resumed collaboration with key food manufacturers, thus opening up new market opportunities for our company. We are keeping a close watch on local market trends, and we are responding proactively to changes with the goal of striking a balance between partnership and profitability.

In spite of the border blockade, we are continuing to fulfil our partnership agreements – including the transportation of goods for export. This is strengthening our reputation as a reliable and foresighted partner, even in difficult times. The method already established before the war remains in place on Ukraine's domestic market: most customers use their own vehicles to collect our products directly from the plant. This is made easier thanks to the plant's favourable geographic location at a distance of only 6 km from Kyiv. Manufacturers deliver their products to the sales and distribution centres in the capital, and they take the bottles with them on the return journey. This efficient circulation of goods and packaging substantially reduces logistics costs.

Risk management in practice

As well as restricted production capacities, we also have to tackle the challenge of ensuring the safety of the energy supply in our Hostomel plant at all times. Daily power cuts and the risk of long-lasting outages are direct consequences of the war. Generators that ensure a stable power supply have been purchased to keep the plant operating.

As well as taking these short-term steps, we are planning on a long-term basis and carrying out further risk analyses. We are examining various options – including the use of alternative energy sources – to guarantee a reliable supply of electricity. Our objectives are not only to overcome the obstacles facing us at present, but also to set up a dependable and resilient system that will continue to support our operations going forward.

[1] (Source: Economic trends from a business point of view (November 2023) - Institute news - Institute - Institute for Economic Research and Policy Consulting. (n.d.). http://www.ier.com.ua/en/institute/news?pid=7331)

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