

CONFECTIONERY

PRODUCTION

chocolate, sweets, snacks & bakery



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Pressing ahead with equipment innovation



The Turia family has built up GSR Cocoa Machinery over the past 25 years

Renowned for the strength of its industrial heritage, the Lecco province in Northern Italy is equally notable for its striking architecture set beside Lake Como.

So, it is perhaps fitting that Confectionery Production's latest site visit includes a journey to this highly productive area playing a key role in the country's export economy with over 4,900 manufacturing companies within the region.

Among these firms are major steel works serving the global motoring trade, as well as many other local businesses including GSR Cocoa Machinery based nearby at Calolziocorte.

For over 25 years, the Turla family has worked to build the reputation of its industrial presses, which have been developed mainly for cocoa production lines across the world, with many machines successfully placed within the confectionery sector.

From our tour, it's clear there is much drive and dedication within its team in working with a diverse range of clients. These range from smaller, inventive artisan manufacturers through to major global chocolate producers, who have sought out GSR's specialist knowledge.

As Giuseppe Turla, general manager, explains, the company remains a family-led enterprise that has gradually grown to employ a team of around 25 employees operating globally.

"This is not just about being a business – what we do is about real passion," he enthuses, as we drive back from a visit to the picturesque lakeside city of Lecco towards the company's headquarters for a tour of its facilities.

According to his father Luigi, who remains very much active within the business, he says there was a strong sense of inevitability in setting up his family's company in an area heavily dominated by a network of industrial enterprises. While its strong manufacturing sector has boosted the area's economy, an increasingly complex range of production challenges are being faced by many of its businesses amid global trading uncertainty.

However, GSR is continuing to respond to major industry trends such as sustainability of equipment production through optimising its equipment performance, as well as enhancing vital core features such as energy efficiency.

Though competition within the confectionery equipment market remains strong, Italy's GSR Cocoa Machinery has stuck to its founding principles of focusing on quality and durability to deliver its latest range of cocoa presses. Neill Barston reports on its ongoing development



The company's main production facilities are in full swing near Milan

There have also been significant demands upon the sector in terms of increased levels of regulation surrounding food safety, which the company has accounted for in terms of building hygiene-focused systems into the design of its presses.

Equipment expansion

This year is proving especially memorable for the firm with the launch of its most high-profile product launches in the form of its large-scale 20/980 press series.

Being towards the top end of its range, the 'big sister' range as it is known, is, according to the business, continues to attract significant interest from manufacturers and is regarded as the star performer of its series.

This has especially been the case given the series largest-ever capacity of 20 pots (its unique production units of measurement), which are aimed at larger manufacturers.

During our day exploring the company's facilities, Giuseppe examines one of the presses marked up for dispatch to South America, underlining just how far its international reach stretches.

As he explains, one of the 20/980's key

elements is its distinctive, ergonomic design, with attention to detail and a focus on hygiene features.

This is a significant factor that the company believes has helped it stand out within the market. Critically, the firm has also worked especially hard in fine tuning its performance, which offers a significant reported production increase of up to ten per cent.

Like other presses in its range, including its largest series, there is also an awareness in developing characteristics including functionality that avoids long periods of production downtime. This is a factor of major importance to manufacturers in avoiding inefficiencies within their operations.

For those requiring less industrial-scale production, the company has devised its 870 compact series offering a production capacity of between 200kg and 750kg an hour, which is supplied as a complete integrated processing line.

It has also branched out to produce accessories for a number of pressing lines, including hydraulic units, vibrating conveyors, de-dusting systems, pre-mixing tanks, as well as installing programmable logic controller (PLC) systems that complement its core range of cocoa presses. ▶

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Customer co-operation

According to Luigi Turla, one of the company's founding principles has been in working closely with customers to create the best possible individually tailored cocoa processing solutions.

"I'm proud that we are working in an area that is most important for its industrial history, and that we are following in its tradition of producing quality products, which is one of key points in our success," says the company's founder, reflecting on his career.

He adds it has been hugely rewarding to see his own venture take shape with the assistance of family including daughter Simona, who serves as marketing manager, who has helped drive the business forward.

Among her recent work was a rebranding exercise to create a new motto for the company, "People, Press, Power," which she explains reflects the fact that in addition to mechanics and engineering, the company count on its employees, who are at the heart of the firm.

Beyond its operations within confectionery, the company's presses are also capable of processing oilseeds such as peanuts, as well as hazelnuts as part of its wider portfolio.

"We are able to cover different needs

of customers and capacities – for any size and dimension required. Every customer is equally important, whether they are big players or smaller businesses," says Luigi on their collective mentality, adding that its facilities such as its on-site research and development laboratory testing are especially important in continually enhancing its products.

His son Giuseppe takes up the company's story, explaining that among its major innovations is in ensuring its production standards conform to the latest ISO 9001-2015 industry quality

management requirements. He believes the company's insistence on maintaining high thresholds of quality workmanship has proved vitally important in building their reputation for high-grade equipment.

Meanwhile, the business has also shown versatility in providing retro-fitting services to a number of their global clients in handling upgrades to existing GSR machinery that has installed, or in breathing new life into pressing equipment from other manufactures. The company's willingness to engage



Giuseppe Turla inspects one of its larger presses due to be exported

Project profile: Indonesian equipment installation

One of GSR's most notable recent installations has been its joint venture with Swiss-based manufacturer Bühler, which opened a cocoa application lab in Jakarta, Indonesia.

The facility aims to offer complete chocolate processing test facilities to its clients who are keen to trial new products. As part of the project, the two companies worked on installing an integrated line that featured a 1/1400 hydraulic cocoa press from GSR, which the Italian firm explains is the latest generation of a series it began nearly a decade ago.

As Luigi Turla reveals, the relationship between the two companies is something they are especially proud of, which he feels has brought the best out of both their engineering capabilities.

Daniel Troxler, marketing director for Bühler, explains that the partnership

forged with GSR had proved mutually beneficial over the past few years and led to some memorable projects.

He says: "Bühler and GSR first established a partnership in 2015 and it's a perfect match for both partners since there is no overlap and both organizations have the same focus on quality and customer benefits. The GSR portfolio helps Bühler to offer the complete system from cocoa to moulded chocolate.

"Furthermore, both sides have a strong network in the industry. The latest proof of the collaboration came with the opening of the cocoa technology lab in Jakarta where Bühler has also invited GSR to be part and install the GSR hydraulic cocoa press 1/1400 and contribute to the winning solution for the development of our customers in Asia."

with reviving other brands' machinery has served also as another unique selling point.

From enhancing capacity levels, loading systems and electrical panels, through to updating loading pumps and conveyor elements of production lines, the company says its broader services continues to prove highly valued by its customers. This is certainly an approach that is far from typical in the industry.

There are small touches such as always attempting to make themselves available to customers around the world at any potential moment, which in itself throws up some testes in responding to enquiries, but customer service is something that is all-important to the company.

Giuseppe adds: "We have different requests that range from bigger players in the market that are looking to reduce their running costs, or those that are looking at bigger presses.

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Quality control of the firm's products is of key importance

"There are of course some mechanical limits to what we can achieve, but there's also a part of the sector that wants to be independent and starting to do their own products, such as gourmet chocolate manufacturers whom we can assist."

"They want certified full-chain bean-to-bar lines and are looking to make their own product, so these might require medium and smaller-scale production sites. Our intention is to follow their needs, so we have created a large portfolio of presses," explains Luigi Turla, who admits producing such a broad product range is not always easy to manage, yet it's a challenge they collectively welcome.

Industry 4.0

As with many fields of industry, one of the biggest evolutions over the past few years has been the rise of Industry 4.0 Internet of Things' web-solutions being applied across a broad scope of applications.

In terms of equipment development, manufacturers are looking to make efficiency savings through computer-controlled improvement for the accuracy and efficiency of machinery.

According to Giuseppe Turla, the company was among the first in its sector to acknowledge the need for HMI control systems to be designed to be easily operated, along with making software data on production values accessible for operators.

He adds: "The key manufacturing

elements of our machinery are all designed internally, including the HMI interfaces. It's not only the case of having the knowledge to design or read software, but to give operators and customers the feeling that they are able to use our machinery.

"This is something that is really important to us – that such systems are developed by people that actually work with these machines so that they are intuitive.

"We are looking at Industry 4.0 as a whole, and are still working on it. We have achieved many big points that are required in regard to this, and really soon we're going to be able to put out our best solutions forward," explains the general manager, who feels the company

GSR company fact file

- GSR Cocoa Machinery was founded in 1992 by Luigi Turla at Calolziocorte, near Milan
- The company's presses range from laboratory presses through to its high capacity 900 series.
- The business exports machinery worldwide, and has grown to employ a total of 25 people, including two generations of the Turla family
- The business has continued to exhibit at a range of industry events including the World Cocoa Conference and Interpack.
- Its latest series, the 20/980 cocoa hydraulic press was launched this March, just a few months after the company marked its 25th anniversary.

is heading in a particularly positive direction.

While he is conscious there is plenty of hard work ahead, the fact the business has a full order book well into next year stands as a testament to a business which continues to meet its challenges head on. Delivering success as a family-owned business working amid major corporations is something that is no tall order, yet its continually evolving product range is testament to a creating a winning formula that they remain hugely passionate about. ♦

Production assembly work at GSR

