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Story

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Customers expect an all-in package

Special-purpose machine manufacturer KOCH Pac-Systeme specializes in providing solutions tailored to the needs of all kinds of customers. But there's much more to the all-in package than just one turnkey machine.

KOCH Pac-Systeme is a member of the Uhlmann Group, making it part of a powerful team that has to face global competition. At the same time, in the words of Jörg Schebetka, who heads the company's marketing and corporate communications, it still maintains the essential down-to-earth, innovative spirit that typifies its origins in the Black Forest.

Although the core competency of KOCH Pac-Systeme has always been based on blister packs, the company perceives itself as a solution provider that supports the entire process, as Schebetka emphasises: "Our service starts with packaging design and then covers everything from presentation of the machine solution to the further stages along the supply chain." It all relies on an extensive network, in which the company can draw on the services of partners with the relevant experience. "Our customers also place a lot of value on partnership and trust," says Schebetka. "The ability to offer end-to-end professional skills is important in that regard."

The solutions the company develops may be customized, but Schebetka notes their flexibility still enables them to be used for all kinds of applications and materials. That means different packaging formats and materials for consumer goods, healthcare products and contact lenses can be given the right presentation without difficulty.

For the various fields of application, the company has experts who are fully familiar with what their customers need – and that applies in particular to sustainable solutions. "Within the Group we have created projects that deal in depth with this subject, which means we have already generated a lot of expertise in this area," Schebetka observes. Growing demand has meant the

**Veranstalter
Organizer**
NürnbergMesse GmbH
Messezentrum
90471 Nürnberg
Germany
T +49 9 11 86 06-0
F +49 9 11 86 06-82 28
fachpack@nuernbergmesse.de
www.fachpack.de

**Vorsitzender des Aufsichtsrates
Chairman of the Supervisory Board**
Marcus König
Oberbürgermeister der Stadt Nürnberg
Lord Mayor of the City of Nuremberg

**Geschäftsführer
CEOs**
Dr. Roland Fleck, Peter Ottmann

**Registergericht
Registration Number**
HRB 761 Nürnberg



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company has invested heavily in alternative packaging in recent years, although it also has lengthy experience to draw on. “As early as the 1990s we launched cardboard cyclePac® packaging onto the market,” says Schebetka. “That has proved a stroke of luck for us now, since it means we have no difficulty in supplying plastic-free packaging.”

Paper complements plastics

Development work continues, however, and now a whole series of environmentally friendly packaging solutions rounds out the range. “That means our customers have a vast amount of choice in structuring their marketing,” asserts Schebetka. “Our ‘cycle’ range includes the right packaging for most customers and applications.” One member of this product range will have a special role to play at the forthcoming FACHPACK: cycleForm®.

This packaging variant, which won the German Packaging Award, is based on organic fibres. The paper-shaping process is a joint development by KOCH and the Dresden University of Technology, which combines the benefits of deep drawing with those of paper. Customers benefit from a technology that is constantly being refined, and will be presented to them for the first time in a live demonstration in Nuremberg.

Another example from the growing portfolio of environmentally friendly packaging is blister packs made from sustainable film, entirely or largely made of recycled or organic material. In turn, this film is either recyclable or biodegradable. “Even so,” says Schebetka, “We still make use of conventional plastic packaging. For safety and hygiene reasons it is often essential. But in such cases it’s obvious that the volume of film and waste has to be kept to a minimum.”

One way in which KOCH Pac-Systeme cuts down the amount of film used, while ensuring its blister packs are perfectly sealed, is to make use of ultrasonic welding. This process allows the packs to have much narrower sealed edges. The same material can also be used for both the pack and the seal, which means the packaging can be recycled directly with no need for the labour-intensive task of separating out the components.

Intelligent cutting processes also achieve substantial savings in material for particular products. “Depending on the form of packaging involved, we select the right process and also optimize the capacity utilization of the machine

format to ensure there is very little film waste, or none at all," Schebetka explains.

Intelligent machines: the key to greater sustainability

For KOCH, however, machine solutions are also important in the final analysis: "We have to look for opportunities to make improvements in this regard and question our existing solutions: Can we reduce our power consumption? Is there room to make savings at a technology level? We are taking an active approach in these areas." The principle for KOCH is that the more productive a packaging machine is, the more sustainable and the lower its resource consumption will be in terms of energy and materials.

But today the machines are often no longer the main factor in a successful order for KOCH. Customers expect an all-in package, which can be achieved only using digitalization tools. "That includes aspects such as predictive maintenance and an associated spare parts shop so we can order replacement parts before they fail," comments Schebetka.

Looking toward the packaging machines of the future, Schebetka still expects further developments in energy savings and efficiency in particular: "This subject is becoming increasingly important, even just from the perspective of gas and electricity prices." Smarter and smarter machine controllers are what make this possible. And that also pays off in terms of flexibility. It is already possible to process different materials and packaging formats using a single machine, but Schebetka still expects powerful dynamics to come into play here.

Visitors to FACHPACK in September can look forward to discovering the latest state of developments at KOCH. "FACHPACK is the most important trade fair in Europe for us in 2022," says Schebetka. "In recent years, it has grown hugely in importance, and our experience was successful even in the middle of the pandemic in 2021."



Contact for press and media

Katja Feess, Christina Freund

T +49 9 11 86 06-83 55

christina.freund@nuernbergmesse.de

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