

# Innovation impresses in Italy

As the first international packaging trade show to open its doors since the pandemic, IPACK-IMA staged a successful comeback at Fiera Milano in early May. Thousands of visitors crowded the halls eager to see innovative advances from over 1100 exhibitors hailing from 27 countries. Lindy Hughson and Dominique Huret walked the halls.



TOP: Crowds gathered to see the wares of 1160 exhibitors from 27 countries.



LEFT: A record 400 journalists attended the show, among them International Packaging Press Organisation members (from left) Naresh Khanna (India), Steven Pacitti (UK), Lindy Hughson (Australia) and Dominique Huret (Belgium).

**R**ETURNING to a full-scale international packaging expo felt like a long overdue homecoming. The sounds of machinery on the show floor, the throngs of people, the technology and expertise on tap all combined to deliver a vista of Italy's packaging and processing prowess.

"IPACK-IMA offers the Italian and international manufacturing industry an attractive and complete technological panorama, with previews of future production trends," said Valerio Soli, president of trade show organiser Ipack Ima. "[It is a] "much-awaited and much-needed return to the industry, the right place and time for exhibitors and visitors who will be at the show looking for just one thing: innovation".

PKN also spoke to Rosanno Bozzi, CEO of Ipack Ima, who captured the scope of this year's show: "We asked each exhibiting company to bring at least one innovative solution and the industry surpassed itself, with more than 2000 product and process innovations at the show, including sustainable packaging, solutions for the selection and processing of raw materials, innovative materials, applications for e-commerce and technology for the smart factory."

Bozzi said IPACK-IMA demonstrated how "the new way of manufacturing will take shape, with machines, plants and products becoming increasingly efficient, interconnected and sustainable".

This was evident as we did our rounds in the halls, and attended some of the allied events, which numbered over 25 and included the Packaging Speaks Green conference and the allied expos Pharmintech, Greenplast, Intra Logistica and Print4All.

## MASTERFUL MACHINATIONS

The Italian packaging machinery sector is in a healthy state. Turnover in 2021 was €8.2bn, with a reported growth in sales of nine per cent.

A fair number of Italian machinery companies are represented in Australia, and PKN stopped by a few of their stands.

At secondary packaging specialist



Cama Group's stand, we spoke to Alessandro Rocco, who shared news of a new distribution partnership with Australian company J L Lennard. Rocco attended AUSPACK a few weeks later to announce the deal.

At IPACK-IMA, Cama showed a fully integrated robotic solution, with a small footprint and a battery of 12 Triaflex robots working in co-flow, capable of packaging about 1000 products per minute. These robots feature an anti-collision system, which allows them to work in a small space without interfering with each other's functions: two product loading lines, one on the right and one on the left, with various configurations.

The lines have an advanced vision system, which allows them to recognise product shapes and do quality checks. They are also equipped with an integrated digital-twin simulation system, which helps to simulate a real production cycle and thus prevent problems that, if discovered during assembly and testing, can be serious.

Another company with an Australian connection was Clevertex Group, a family-owned company based in northern Italy, which manufactures and supplies innovative front- and end-of-line solutions together with a comprehensive range of container- and package-handling systems. At IPACK-IMA, it was showcasing a Smart Packaging Hub, an exclusive virtual space for technological innovation and digitalisation for food and beverage manufacturers.

Part of ProMach, PE Labellers

is represented in Australia by Foodmach. PKN spoke to Michele Ferrarini, who expounded the merits of the Modular CM on display, an ergonomic and modular automatic rotary labelling machine with a layout that can be reconfigured quickly and easily, designed with flexibility in mind.

The unit has interchangeable labelling stations with pressure sensitive technology and cold glue installed on it, replaceable in a few steps according to production needs.

The Modular CM also has fast product changeover times, owing to its distinctive universal clamping star-wheel and automatic motor adjustment for format changeovers.

Incidentally, Foodmach has recently installed and commissioned two very complex, high-speed PE Labellers' solutions for a global luxury brand-owner.

At Robopac, which had a large and impressive stand at the show, Marco Vanucci spoke to us about the Robopac Helix Max stretchwrapper, which is available via Foodmach in the Australian market, and was on show for the first time at IPACK-IMA.

Helix Max is the latest rotary arm fully automatic stretch wrapper developed by Robopac. Vannucci says, thanks to its special patented pre-stretch carriage with two reels, it "makes possible the impossible": a wrapping cycle extremely resistant to tearing, superior to any traditional systems, helping to reduce downtimes due to film breaks.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: PE Labellers' Michele Ferrarini with the modular CM rotary labeller;

Cama showcased a fully integrated, Industry 4.0 enabled robotic solution with a battery of 12 Triaflex robots;

Robopac's Technoplat turntable wraps pallets using paper instead of stretch film;

CEO of Ipack Ima, Rosanno Bozzi, was impressed by the high standard of innovation.

Helix Max can be equipped with Cube Technology, another Robopac patented technology that allows the application of exactly the right amount of film, in the right position with precisely the correct containment force.

One of the most interesting displays at Robopac was the Technoplat PW (Paper Wrapping) automatic stretch-wrapper, which can wrap a pallet using paper instead of stretch film. This machine stopped visitors in their tracks, and represented the high level of interest overall in paper-based solutions across the board.

This stretchwrapper replaces stretch-film with recyclable paper for pallet wrapping and load stability applications. As with a normal stretch film machine, the PW automatically attaches the paper to a full pallet, as well as cutting the paper once the pallet wrap is completed. The unit comes with the usual Robopac intuitive user touch screen control panel.

PINNACLE OF PACKAGING

SEVERAL awards programs showcased winners at IPACK-IMA. Here we highlight a few that caught our eye.

Sleever International's 'Cousu Main' sleeve label picked up an award from the Flexostars for premium quality in flexographic printing. Designed for the Cousu Main vintage from Turckheim Cellars, with illustrations created by William Arlotti, the sleeve decoration (pictured below left) is inspired by haute couture. This edition is named #OOTD3 Origamix, with intense colours adorned with metallic effects and enhanced with reliefs, using Sleever's Skinsense and Metalst products. The award rewards excellence and innovation in the use of flexography and salutes the collaboration between the Cave de Turckheim, William Arlotti and Sleever, and the "alliance of creativity, innovation and expertise in the service of emotions".

In the Oscar dell' imballaggio awards, Irplast was recognised for its work on a roll-fed pre-glued label lying on a caveated polypropylene substrate. The backing is transparent or high shrink polypropylene. Irplast's proprietary 'Lisim Technology' enables 360° decoration on aluminum, tinplate cans or aerosol containers (pictured above). The film is easily separable from the container and can be ISCC PLUS certified, according to



the mass balance approach, and is derived from renewable sources (vegetable oils), or from chemical recycling of post-consumer plastic packaging.

Another winner of an Oscar dell' imballaggio was CPR System for the Redea reusable and recyclable crate made from PP. This crate has collapsible sides, designed to contain fruit and vegetables for large-scale distribution. The Redea crate optimises transport efficiency, safe delivery, food waste reduction, while ensuring the excellent presentation of products at the point of sale.

Procter & Gamble won a World-Star award for its refill system for shampoo (pictured below), which comprises a reusable, 100 per cent aluminum bottle with a pump and recyclable refill pouch, made using 60 per cent less plastic (per ml versus standard brand bottle). This forms part of P&G Beauty's commitment to reduce virgin plastic usage by 50 per cent in shampoo and conditioner bottles, producing 300 million fewer virgin plastic bottles yearly.

Another WorldStar in the sustainability category went to Spanish polymer packaging producer Enplast for the L'Oréal PCR refill. This one-litre shampoo bottle has been produced with 94 per cent post-consumer recycled plastic. The six per cent remaining is attributed to the colourant. The bottle comes in a wide range of colours with pastels and pearls in keeping with the premium image of L'Oréal. This collaboration shows that no visual sacrifice is necessary to develop sustainable packaging.



ABOVE: Sidel's PressureSAFE PET aerosol container gives brands a sustainable dispensing spray pack option.

BELOW: Goglio's Fres-co Green coffee bags.

TOP RIGHT: Serac's 100% PET blow moulded yoghurt pot.

BOTTOM RIGHT: EasySnap's paper-based, single-dose sachet.

MATERIAL WORLD

Sustainability was, not surprisingly, the prevailing theme in materials and container innovation. Paper-based packaging solutions were evident in abundance. EasySnap – the one hand opening technology – had its new paper-based EasySnap single-dose sachet on display. Made from more than 75 per cent paper, it has the same smart advantages (accessible, printable) of the patented EasySnap, plus it is recyclable in the paper bin.

V-Shapes was promoting its recyclable PP single-dose packaging, which has been certified by Tomra, a producer of customised sorting solutions, as 'easy to detect' in the waste stream for proper sorting.

These sachets are constructed with material from a variety of sources, including V-Shapes-developed materials, as well as substrates provided by Sihl that are specifically designed for recyclability and ideal for use with digital inkjet printing.

Sidel launched its patented PressureSAFE, a PET aerosol container designed to give home and personal care brands the opportunity to offer an environmentally sustainable, dispensing spray pack. This new PET product-packaging solution is approved in the traditional PET recycling stream. Sidel says the PET container offers the same safety profile as metal aerosol containers. The container's name refers to the PET dispensing spray's resistance to pressure in order to maintain a safe structure, and protect against leakages, breakages and roll-out during transportation and storage



Serac exhibited a prototype individual yoghurt pot made from 100 per cent PET, produced from a different type of preform. Serac's blow-moulding technology enables the production of cups with a top hole smaller than the base size. This kind of shape is iconic for artisan-style yoghurts, and often selected by sustainable brands. Serac uses SBL machines (linear blow moulding) and can help customers develop new shapes, oval, square and complex-shaped bottles for different markets. The blow-moulding units can produce up to 18,000 cups per hour (depending on cup size) and are thus suitable for premium segments.

Goglio (represented in Australia by Jet Technologies), was displaying its new coffee laminate bags. The Fres-co Green coffee bags are made 'suitable for recycling' or certified compostable.

Goglio proposes laminates of polyolefin complexes or mono-material with a proprietary lacquer. Depending on the barrier needed (oxygen-moisture), Goglio offer various films suitable for recycling. For compostable films it offers a laminate of cellulose with high barrier or bio polymer, certified compostable by TUV Austria.

ONWARDS TO 2025

From the depth and breadth of the machinery and material innovation on show, and the strong messages of sustainability coming through both the educational forums and the numerous special expos at IPACK-IMA, it's clear that the Italian packaging industry is among the global leaders forging the way forward in this important manufacturing sector. The next IPACK-IMA will be staged on 27-30 May, 2025. ■



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