

Cost-driven innovations

Introducing energy saving devices is a priority for auxiliary equipment manufacturers to counter the rising costs of production.

Asia and X dryer pull for Moretto

Since the largest market for its products is in Asia, it is no surprise that Italian company *Moretto* has received two proposals for joint venture manufacture in China, said Renato Moretto, President of the company, in an interview with PRA at the company's Massanzago facility recently. These, however, have been put on hold pending clarification of investment laws in the country and the 32 international patents the company has for its products. In addition, China currently poses a bit of a problem for the Italian manufacturer - in respect of language, culture and mindset. While recognising that it is a huge market that cannot be ignored, in Moretto's view it is also one that seems unhealthily driven by price rather than technology. He added, "We would like to build a dedicated product line in China but the market there at this point does not quite demand the high level of technology that we offer." Moretto expects another two or three years before high-tech products will begin to be accepted by the China market.

He went on to say, "Prospects in India and Thailand, meanwhile, are encouraging, thanks to good contacts there. We are studying the possibility of manufacturing in India. An agreement has also been reached in Korea with *Yudo*, a supplier of hot runner systems, to distribute our systems and maybe look at the possibility of a manufacturing deal." In any case, Moretto said that he is in no hurry, given that he has his hands full right now, "meeting orders and stepping up production for most of the markets, including China, where sales have doubled in the last few years."



Renato Moretto designed the company's latest generation X dryer and spent two years studying the air flow in molecular sieve dryers, "since other suppliers were not aware of how to obtain the best results"

Nevertheless, the company is expanding its production base. "A new plant will be set up in Israel by the end of 2007, while another one is planned for Poland. This will be strategically located in the European growth corridor near the German border," revealed Moretto. Currently, the company's production is entirely based in Italy, in four factories with a combined floor space of 25,000 sq m, which will be expanded by another 10,000 sq m. It produces 4,000 machines of various types per year and is able to process 1,200 orders a day, using a customised ERP system.

Set up in 1980, *Moretto* counts the manufacture of dehumidification systems as its core business, accounting for 40% of its turnover of EUR24 million in 2005. It also makes and sells centralised feeding and dosing systems (volumetric, micro and gravimetric) in a business that has established a presence in 49 countries. With a growth of 6% last year, *Moretto* expects a higher turnover of 10% this year, "pushed by sales from Asia."

The Italian company is unusually confident for a young company. Then again, few players in the field can boast of having an X generation to bank on. First made available in 2005, the X dryer represents a solution "designed to change the concept of dehu-

midification." The result of three years of research and development, which includes in-depth study of the molecular sieve dryer, the latest dryer model provides an alternative way of dehumidifying materials. "Whereas competitors manufacture systems that have one type of treatment for different materials, the X dryer is able to offer treatment processes best suited for the specific materials," explained Moretto.

Fully computerised with recipes to serve 40 different types of materials and with processing parameters that can be changed on the run, the system reportedly offers energy savings of 60%. "When we carried out in-house trials, using our dryer as well as conventional and vacuum dryers, we were able to get 72% savings at a temperature of 150°C for PEEK material," claimed Moretto, adding that with a 180°C working temperature 80% savings are possible. The patented system comes in three sizes, to suit airflow capacity, and at an output of 60 kg/hour renders savings of EUR4,000 a year with full payback on investment achieved in ten months, Moretto said.

Wittmann to push forward

While one company is still contemplating the possibility of manufacture in China, Austrian producer *Wittmann* is expanding its facility in Shanghai to 7,500 sq m, according to Dr Werner Wittmann. Speaking to PRA at the Fakuma show last year, the President of

the company said, "Currently, we produce 300 units of robots, mould temperature controllers and granulators. We want to expand it to 500 units and add on materials



The compact Drymax model