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Growing demand for multi-way packaging
Aviko aims at sustainable logistics

Being an international player in the potato processing industry, sustainability is high on Aviko's agenda. When it comes to its logistics, this translates into an increasing use of multi-way packaging. In 2009, Aviko partly switched to Euro Pool System's foldable trays for the transport of fresh chips. "Important customers don't want any packaging waste."

In the idyllic village of Steenderen, Aviko's flags fly in front of the former town hall. Who would expect the potato processor's headquarters to be here? And yet, this location wasn't chosen by accident: the village of Keppel is located within a stone's throw. Keppel is the base of the international chips giant, currently in fourth place in potato products world sales.

Added value for the supply chain

The secret of the company's success is to be found in its history. Aviko started in 1962 as a cooperative of potato growers who wanted to keep the processing of their product in their own hands. Aviko is still owned by arable farmers through the cooperative Royal Cosun. The company's mission '*Creating value from potatoes*' clearly indicates that potatoes are at the heart of its business. Jan van Wilsem, General Sales Manager Foodservice, explains: "We create added value for everyone in the supply chain: for the producers, for our employees, for the shareholders and for the customer. For customers, we are a reliable supplier with a wide and innovative range of products and a good margin."

From supply chains to catering

To stay big, anticipating the market's wishes is of utmost importance. And how can this market be described? Jan van Wilsem: "The market of potato products is divided into two segments: on the one hand, there's the retail segment and, on the other hand, the foodservice sector. The latter is the biggest with a 60% market share. Big fast food supply chains are our customers, but also international interior decoration store chains and catering companies. Hotels and event parks are another important customer group. A big part of this market is sensitive to the influence of the seasons. A cold spring immediately translates into a low turnover for the foodservice market." More interesting facts about the market: Germany is the biggest buyer, followed by England, France and the Benelux (see Facts & figures below). Van Wilsem: "We concentrate on Europe, but our potato products are also eaten in South America. A leading point in our marketing approach is that we offer clients and consumers variation, surprise and renewal."

Lorries on an LPG / diesel mixture

Renewal for Aviko also means sustainability. Corporate social responsibility is an increasingly important topic for the potato giant. Frank Scholten, Transport Manager: "In the production process, 100% of the potatoes is processed. We don't throw

anything away. What's more, we choose to bake in sustainable fats. In the area of logistics, we're currently testing lorries that run on an LPG / diesel mixture. We're also testing refrigerators that don't run on diesel engines anymore, but that use carbon dioxide to refrigerate. The choice of multi-way packaging fits in this same trend." Aviko has noticed that important customers are following the same shift towards sustainability. "Big buyers in particular don't want to use boxes anymore. They are urging their suppliers to deliver their products in multi-way packaging. Customers see it as their corporate social responsibility to push back packaging waste", explains Scholten.

European coverage

Since March 2009, Aviko partially packages fresh chips for the foodservice market in Euro Pool System's returnable foldable trays. The choice fell on one particular type of foldable tray, in which two 5-kilo fresh chips bags can be fitted. Scholten: "We used to have our own crates, but having enough units available was troublesome. What's more, our crates weren't foldable. Washing the crates took us a long time and our return logistics weren't efficient. That's why we chose not to invest in our own pool anymore, but rather to adhere to an existing system. Why did we choose Euro Pool System? Our biggest customers knew the company and it is a very popular system. Besides, we thought the European coverage was an important advantage."

Efficient return logistics

Choosing this pool has proven to be an excellent decision, adds Frank Scholten. "The trays are always sufficiently available and clean, which means our transport and production departments work without stress. And the deposit on the crates makes perfect sense to everyone. We deliver our products to end customers and wholesalers. We really appreciate Euro Pool System taking care of the return logistics from the many different locations because we don't have to worry about that anymore. Besides, their trays are foldable, which allows for efficient transport. Six empty trays only take as much space as one full tray". This packaging solution with returnable foldable trays is particularly welcomed in Germany. "German customers are extremely satisfied with the new work method. Ten percent of our production of fresh chips for the Foodservice market is packaged in multi-way packaging now, which represents 1.6 million rotations per year. And the numbers are growing steadily. We expect to also switch to returnable trays for our fresh specialities. These trays reinforce the healthy image of our products," concludes Scholten.

Passionate entrepreneurs

A visit to the Aviko factory suffices to understand what makes it a world company. After efficient processing - peeling, cutting, sorting, blanching, drying, baking and packaging - bags of fresh chips roll from the belt into green foldable trays. These passionate entrepreneurs talk proudly about their wonderful product, the great commitment of their employees and the company's service-oriented attitude. Outside, advertising images on incoming and outgoing lorry sides remind us of what it is all about: it starts with a potato and it becomes a golden yellow chip. '*Creating value from potatoes*', every day again.

For more information, please contact Dymph Neeteson, PR & Communication.
Euro Pool System International B.V.
P.O. Box 1887
NL-2280 DW Rijswijk (ZH)
T: +31 (0)70 3014 1 30
F: +31 (0)70 3014 1 99
E: dymph.neeteson@europoolsystem.com
I: www.europoolsystem.com