



# INFORM

EUROPE HOLDS MUCH POTENTIAL.

Portrait of the German Fürst Group. 3

FROM ZERO TO FOUR BILLION IN TEN YEARS.

Successful reconstruction at the example of RKV. 12

MOULD BASE PLATES FROM OUR OWN PRODUCTION.

New department starts at Otto Hofstetter AG. 16

# HARDER THAN THE EUROPEAN CURRENCY.



Dear Readers

The introduction of the euro made things considerably easier for us. It helped us in the translation of our strategy of having to convert the least possible foreign currencies into Swiss francs. Many suppliers invoice us in euro anyway and investments in machinery and equipment are in the majority also charged in the European single currency. This meant that we had to change only approximately half of the received euro into Swiss francs. Initially the exchange rate between euro and Swiss franc was 1 € to 1.70 CHF.

The drastic deterioration of the European currency that set in about 18 months ago hit us severely. With the euro having a share of 70 per cent in our total sales, we incurred a loss of 14 per cent. The no doubt well-meant advice from the financial experts showed no effect. Clearly more helpful were our partners on the procurement side who absorbed a part of the lost margin.

It was clear to us, however, that the biggest contribution towards a compensation of the currency losses could only come from us. This is why we worked flat out on the implementation of our strategic targets. In the focus were and are the constant improvement of our moulds, qualitative and quantitative process optimizations and the increase of our productivity by target-oriented investments.

Let me now wish you enjoyable reading of the new issue of our customer magazine. It presents you two successful German enterprises, contains two stories from the exciting world of PET and packaging, and offers you a glance behind the scenes of our youngest department, the production of mould base plates.

**Stanislaus Spörri**

Member of the Management, Otto Hofstetter AG



**Title page.**

Olaf Allekotte, Operations Manager of  
Rossbacher Kunststoffverpackungs GmbH,  
relies on precision and thereby on  
injection moulds of Otto Hofstetter AG.

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“EUROPE  
HOLDS MUCH  
POTENTIAL.”

The German **Fürst Group** is a traditional family enterprise. Under the management of the **third generation** the company has expanded successfully and operates – apart from the HQ in the Franconian Hallerndorf – a further factory in Germany and two in France. The Fürst Group ranks among the first European addresses for **sugar-confectionery packaging** products. **Mrs Helen Fürst, General Manager**, talks to the interviewer of INFORM.

### What are the basic facts of the “Fürst” success story?

The company was founded by my grandparents in 1944. Initially the focus was on mouldmaking exclusively. My parents took over in 1969 and made it a private limited company. Although my father was a skilled toolmaker, he expanded the business activity and started with injection moulding. His customers at the time were in the majority the automotive and electrical industries. The share of packaging products was quite small then. This changed in 2001 when my parents passed the responsibility for the enterprise on to me. Today we are specialized in packaging products.

### What does the company look like now?

Three enterprises make up the Fürst Group. On the one part these are the Fürst GmbH with locations in Hallerndorf and Erlangen, and on the other our two French companies Futurplast and Fürst-Plast. In Hallerndorf, Moussac and Fourques we make plastic packaging articles exclusively for the foodstuffs industry, in Erlangen we also operate a mould shop.

### Can you state some key data?

In the Fürst Group we currently employ 94 persons. On a total of 75 injection moulding machines we produce for customers all over Europe, a few in the USA and one in New Caledonia. Among our regular customers are internationally known brands such as Haribo, Katjes, Chupa Chups and Kraft. The Group achieves annual total sales of 29 million euro, which is three times as much as ten years ago.

**“THE CLEAR FOCUS  
MAKES THE FÜRST GROUP  
A RELIABLE PARTNER.”**

Helen Fürst

### What is the recipe for this success?

Like every recipe, it is made up of various ingredients. Among them are the clear strategy, our entrepreneurial values, the engagement of our employees and the good feel for the needs of the customers. An important factor from a strategic point of view is no doubt the clear focus on the food and sugar-confectionery industry. Thanks to this concentration we remain the innovative and reliable partner which our customers need for their own success. This is intensified by our traditional values aligned to medium-sized business: The decision paths are short and efficient, and a word is still a word.

### How do you stay innovative?

The sugar-confectionery trade is very cautious as regards the development of packaging products. Even very big producers don't have their own development department. We fill this gap. We look for solutions of our own accord if we detect new requirements in the discussion with customers or observe new trends in the market. It sometimes happens that a customer wishes to optimize his existing packaging article, but doesn't know how. Here also we step in and develop a solution.

**“WE CONVINCED OUR CUSTOMERS  
WITH OUR PERFORMANCE,  
NOT WITH THE LOWEST PRICE.”**

Helen Fürst

### You tackle these tasks so well that you hold patents.

Some years ago we developed a safety closure for which we were able to secure a patent. In foodstuffs packaging the safety of closures is a very central aspect. On the one hand it must be guaranteed that nobody gets at the content before the sale, and on the other it must be possible for the consumer to conveniently open the packaging and close it again. If all goes well we shall apply for a patent for a new closure technique this autumn. It will be a novel closure relying on an ultrasonic process. This is all I wish to disclose for the time being.

### Which USPs characterize the Fürst Group?

To be mentioned here is without doubt the BRC/IoP certification. We were presumably the first moulding company which complied with this European hygiene standard for packers of foodstuffs. Our hygiene management is fully aligned to this standard, which means that containers from Fürst can be used for primary packaging purposes without reservation. A second point is our in-mould-labelling process. Although our branch of the industry had difficulties with IML, we started early and now draw from much experience.

### Are the rising material prices a topic?

In principle our competitors don't buy much cheaper than we do, either. It makes little sense, therefore, to think about it too much. As far as I'm concerned the price discussion is a wrong approach anyway. Fürst relies on top quality. To this end we run the world's best machines and injection moulds and use nothing but top-quality raw materials. We want to convince our customers in the long term and

aren't interested in a quick profit. By concentrating on the competitor one loses the customer from his focus, and this would be thoughtless, to put it mildly.

**What are the perspectives in food packaging?**

The way I see it the signs point towards growth. The mobility of us humans will continue to increase, and thereby also the need for rigid packaging. A further trend of society which is likely to result in new sales is the regionality. I see development potential for us above all in the area of fresh products such as yoghurt or milk. Especially here in the South of Germany.

**In other words, the Fürst Group doesn't branch out to other continents?**

From today's point of view an expansion towards Asia isn't an option for our Group. My wish is to have the best possible understanding of our customers and their markets. Based on the cultural differences I believe this isn't realistic in Asia. If a geographical expansion was indicated I'd sooner look to the USA. Firstly because we already cooperate with a customer there and secondly because we're culturally closer to the Americans. As pointed out, however, Europe still holds ample reserves for the Fürst Group.

**What is the biggest challenge of the future?**

The cost of electricity in Germany is our biggest worry right now. The German "law on renewable energy sources" has led to a massive increase of the power prices. With a share of about 29 per cent of the gross added value this weighs very heavily. We can compare with the figures from our works in France, where electricity costs only half as much.

**What possibilities do you have to oppose this development?**

There isn't a genuine way out, or only alternatives which we don't really want to consider in earnest. Apart from saving



energy and improving the energy efficiency the only effective measure at this time is to buy our energy each morning on the power exchange. Energy trading isn't among our core competences, but with the development in this country there is no way around it. A trend which isn't really in favour of medium-sized companies in Germany.

**What tasks must be coped with next within the Fürst Group?**

Apart from the daily challenges of our customers and of the market we are currently setting up the fourth generation. My son has joined the company already some time ago and works now as Deputy Production Manager. My daughter is in the middle of her studies of process technology. Whether or not she will join the enterprise at a later stage is not yet sure. ■



**FÜRSTGROUP**

Plastic packaging products, injection moulding processes and mouldmaking. Specialist sugar-confectionery packaging. With operations in Hallerndorf, Erlangen, Moussac and Fourques.

Equipment: 75 injection moulding machines  
 Annual sales: 29 million euro



# A GOLDEN BEAR GOES AROUND THE WORLD.

**Packaging** products for just about anything can be made by injection moulding, whereby **stringent conditions** guarantee the safety of both consumers and products. The world's probably **most famous sweets**, the "Gold-Bears" of **Haribo**, benefit from this as well. Packed in plastic they travel around the globe and entuse children and adults alike.

The injection moulding technique enables the production of highly versatile, attractive plastic packaging articles which offer interesting advantages when it comes to packaging design, weight, stackability and product protection.

Anyone making plastic packaging products for foodstuffs must abide by the stringent conditions imposed by the Eu-

ropean Code on Plastics. These specifications guarantee the foodstuffs' safety and ensure that the products arrive at the customers' hygienically impeccable and in a constantly high quality, regardless how long the transport chain is. Haribo also relies on this entirely because its products are sought after all over the world and must reaffirm a trust built up over decades.

**Started at the bottom.**

Hans Riegel had the Haribo company registered in the commercial register of the town of Bonn on 13 December 1920. On completion of school he had been trained as a cooker of sweets. He worked for Kleuten & Meier during five years, was a partner in the Heinen company and then became self-employed with his own company in 1920.

**The bear's dance begins.**

The young entrepreneur Hans Riegel achieves his first success by inventing the "dancing bear" – a bear-shaped piece of fruit gum which later becomes world-famous as the legendary "Haribo Gold-Bear". Demand increases steadily. After three years Hans Riegel lays the second foundation stone of the Haribo success story with the production of liquorice articles. A best-seller are the liquorice bars with the stamped-on Haribo writing. Other titbits of liquorice follow, among them the "Liquorice Snail", by now acclaimed globally.

**Liquorice is top. The slogan also.**

In the mid-thirties the company creates the genially catchy publicity slogan "Haribo macht Kinder froh" (Haribo makes children happy). During the Second World War the production collapses mainly on account of the scarcity of raw materials. The company founder deceases in 1945. His wife

takes over during the first period after the war. In 1946, after their return from captivity as POW, the brothers Hans and Paul Riegel take over the management of the company from their mother. Hans is in charge of the commercial side, marketing and advertising. Paul is responsible for the production until his death in 2009. One of his most spectacular inventions is the liquorice-snail wrapping machine. The company flourishes. In 1950, only five years after the war, it employs already a workforce of approx. 1000 persons.

**Haribo makes children happy everywhere.**

Haribo developed steadily to one of the most popular, best-known and highly liked quality brands of the sugar-confectionery industry. The "Gold-Bears" are by now a top seller and highly desired. The Americans love their "Gold-Bears" just like the Indians. The Spaniards their "Ositos de Oro", the Polish their "Złote Misie", and both the Japanese and Chinese have also grown to relish them. The sweet bears in all colours have made the grade and become the favourites around the world.

**THE GOLDEN BEARS OF HARIBO ARE AN INTERNATIONAL TOP-SELLER AND KEEP WINNING EVER MORE NEW FANS.**

Apart from the bears, Haribo developed a multitude of other sweet delicacies in the course of time, matched in their taste to the different preferences typical for the countries concerned. For example foamed sugar products such as the "Chamallows", a marshmallow mixture for France, "Starmix" for England, "Matador Mix" for Scandinavia, a blend of fruit gum and liquorice. These country-specific specialities are further elements of the company's international success.

**From the Greeks and Romans to gum arabic.**

Even the old Greeks and Romans 2000 years ago enjoyed baked products sweetened with the juice of dates or honey. Gingerbread was already known in the Middle Ages. Seafarers brought the cocoa bean to Europe in the 16th century. Cane sugar, imported through Venice, was a luxury for a long time. The sweet delight democratized itself with the beet sugar. Inventive confectioners discovered in the 19th century that sugar could be combined with the resin of a certain acacia tree. This resin was gum arabic, the purest variety of which originates in the province of Kordofan in the Sudan. Used as alternatives to gum arabic are gelatine, starch and agar-agar, a tropical type of algae. ■



Plastic packaging products satisfy highest hygiene standards, which is why Haribo uses them as primary packaging.



## LIGHT FROM THE BOTTLE.

In the legend of the Swiss author Gottfried Keller the citizens of Seldwyla (Foolstown) erected a church without windows, then tried to capture the sunlight in buckets and cart it into the building. They failed, of course, but a group of students of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) now succeeded in collecting the daylight and “carrying” it into the dark, windowless rooms of the favelas in Colombia. The transfer medium they use are clear PET bottles filled with water and bleaching powder.

“Liter of Light” is the name of the global project. In Switzerland, a group of students of the Executive School of Management, Technology and Law of St. Gallen (HSG) has taken up the idea and realized a first concrete project. Maximilian Schosser (23) is one of them. He was in the slums of Bogotá for eight weeks and installed used PET bottles in roofs to provide the people with light in their huts and dark corners of the favelas. And this without expensive light bulbs, without electrical cables, plugs and switches. Just with simple used PET bottles, in an economically and ecologically highly sustainable way.

**“ABOUT 1.3 BILLION PEOPLE LIVE WITHOUT ELECTRICITY AND COULD BENEFIT FROM LIGHT IN BOTTLES.”**

Maximilian Schosser

**And this is how it works.**

The light-giving “bulb” is nothing but a used 1.5 litre PET bottle which serves as light source. It is filled with a mixture of water and a little chloride. This bottle containing the mixture is secured in the roof of the hut with sticky tape in such a manner that one half protrudes upwards and the other half downwards. Such a lamp lasts five to seven years and costs practically nothing. It can generate about 55 watts without electricity for free, which is sufficient for e.g. a child to do his/her homework.

**“Liter of Light Switzerland” in Bogotá and soon in India.**

The Swiss organization of “Liter of Light” was founded at the HSG in 2011. Within a mere six months the number of members doubled from 10 to 20 students. LOLS is already investigating further illumination projects. Maximilian Schosser explains that 2000 “solar bottles” are due to be installed in the slums of Hyderabad in India.

The global demand for light in bottles is enormous. It is estimated that approx. 1.3 billion people have no access to electricity. They belong in the majority to the lower class and can hardly cover their own basic needs, let alone make further investments. Their tight housing conditions force them to live in the dark also during daytime. “Liter of Light” brings light to their dark homes for the first time. The bright light is a sheer joy, and this without installation costs for power lines and at zero operating costs.

**A hit economically as well as ecologically.**

The whole is exemplary from a both economical and ecological point of view. The CO<sub>2</sub> emission from this climatologically neutral solar illumination concept is zero. The applied



materials and technologies are sustainable to the maximum extent and completely renewable. The “system” can be set up and installed on the spot extremely easily. It takes only little knowledge of the functioning mode and hardly any know-how about the correct installation on the roof.

**“PEOPLE REACTED WITH MUCH ENTHUSIASM WHEN LIGHT SHONE UP IN THEIR HUT FOR THE FIRST TIME.”**

Maximilian Schosser

**From recycling to up-cycling.**

The solar illumination system with PET bottles is a classic example for an up-cycling project. Up-cycling means that waste material is not only reused, but that it is newly used for another than the original purpose and thus brings additional benefits. In this case the PET bottle is no longer used for the storage of liquids, but new as a light source.

**How did this happen and what's next?**

Maximilian Schosser describes the concrete intervention of the Swiss “Liter of Light” persons in Bogotá as follows: “We worked in fours. Depending on the roofing material it took us half an hour or up to an hour and a half per bottle. The people were thrilled when the light shone for the first time >



With simplest technical means but a considerable personal effort and the support of the inhabitants, the voluntary helpers of "Liter of Light" install the solar lights in the roofs of the slum huts. The effect is convincing: One solar bottle provides as much light as a 55-watt electric light bulb at no cost at all.



in their hut.” Prior to each installation Maximilian and his helpers demonstrated the principle with a shoebox, but the people couldn’t really image the effect. They were all the more pleased when the installation worked and in fact filled their home with daylight.

**Instruction for self-help on the spot.**

The Swiss presented the project also at the two universities of Bogotá. This because, ecologically, it wouldn’t make sense to jet around the world to install bottle lights. The locals can do it just as well. Maximilian Schosser comments: “What struck us was that in Colombia a lot more young persons showed an interest in “Liter of Light” than in Switzerland. In St. Gallen about a dozen attended the information event, but in Bogotá the hall was much too small to cope with the rush.” The next project in the pipeline is in India and due to start in October with three teams, as LOLS member Geraldine Lüdi said in the discussion. It should not only support the inhabitants of slums in India, but serve as basis for a movement within Asia to give people better access to light. With and thanks to PET and a brilliant, simple idea. ■

# LITER OF LIGHT SWITZERLAND.

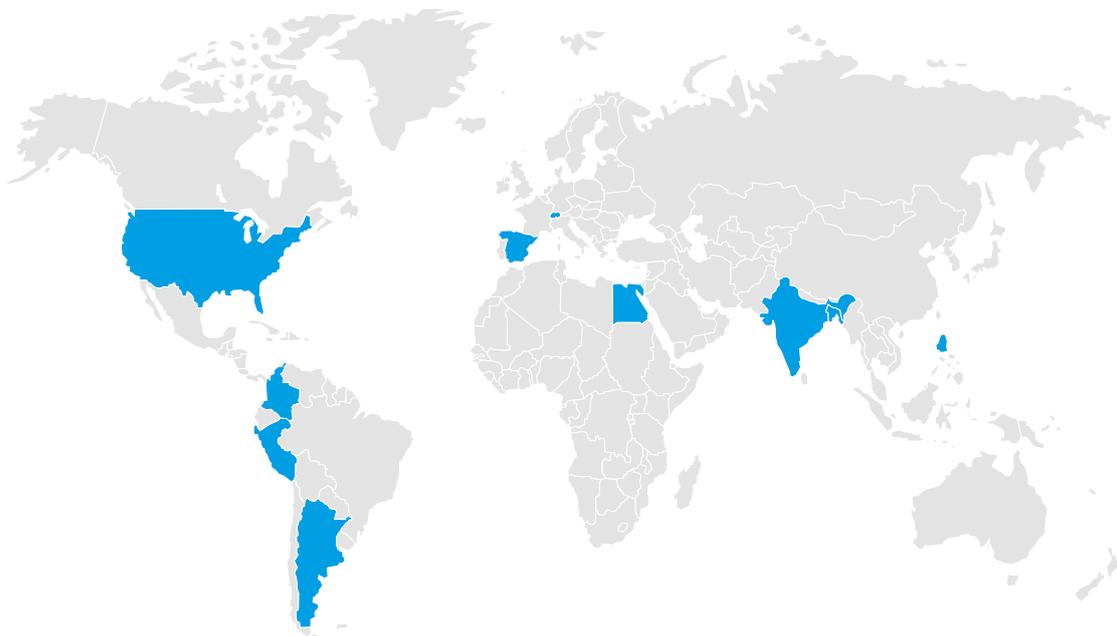
“Liter of Light Switzerland” is a non-profit organization and part of a global network of young people. The objective of the movement is to provide underprivileged households with an ecological source of light at no cost if possible.

The Swiss organization was founded by ten graduates of the University of St.Gallen in autumn 2011. Within a period of just 6 months the team grew to 20 persons.

The globally active non-profit organization relies on donations. To this end a safe and simple online donation system exists under [www.betterplace.org](http://www.betterplace.org).



Get an impression of the fascinating project and the work of “Liter of Light”.



The “Liter of Light” project is present in the form of autonomous country organizations on five continents. The non-profit programme was initiated by the MyShelter Foundation, founded by Ilac Diaz, a student from the Philippines.

# FROM ZERO TO FOUR BILLION IN TEN YEARS.

**Last year [Rossbacher Kunststoffverarbeitungs GmbH](#) celebrated its tenth anniversary. Within a short time the company developed to an important German [producer of preforms](#). Operations Manager [Olaf Allekotte](#) gives us an insight in a successful reconstruction project in former East Germany.**

Rossbacher Kunststoffverarbeitungs GmbH (RKV) is part of the Mitteldeutsche Erfrischungsgetränke GmbH & Co. KG (MEG Group). Below a brief description of the company.

RKV was founded by Dr. Christian Künzer in 2001. Right from the beginning it was set up as a dedicated production facility of PET preforms for the filling operations of the Mitteldeutsche Erfrischungsgetränke GmbH & Co. KG. At the outset the company employed seven persons and produced about 90 million preforms per year. Today RKV ranks among Germany's leading preform makers and offers safe jobs to 107 persons from the surrounding communities. The annual output is currently 2.4 billion preforms and 1.6 billion closures.

## What are the strengths of RKV?

One of our pluses is that we've grown step by step. The steady development over the last ten years has taught us to adjust to new requirements. We took advantage of the inevitable mistakes we naturally also made, to improve. We underwent a permanent further development on both the technical and organizational side. This made us what we are today: A very flexible, highly efficient operation with a workforce to which quality comes first. On our route we were also able to benefit from a good cooperation with our main suppliers who supported us effectively with their know-how.

## In 2001 you started with seven employees. How did the subsequent growth take place?

In retrospect one can say: It was an exemplary reconstruction. At the start, almost twelve years ago, our work halls were really out in the sticks. But the conscious and target-oriented research and investment management of RKV led to a highly dynamic development over the last ten years. Apart from the more than 8 million euro spent on the infrastructure (e.g. buildings, storage facilities and stabilizations right to roadwork) we invested more than 30 million euro in engineering and product development.

**What were the considerations which prompted MEG to take the stony path and build up its own production of preforms?**

At RKV the objective emerged to set up an own preform production plant as a subcontractor for MEG's own beverage filling operations. Like in other enterprises, the aim was to extend the value creation chain. Mind you, it is the influence on the development of the preform and bottle geometries that is decisively responsible for the improved product quality and the performance increase. This enabled us about five years ago, for example, to realize a massive weight reduction thanks to a new preform and bottle design.

**"WE'VE BEEN ABLE TO  
BENEFIT CONSIDERABLY FROM  
THE KNOW-HOW OF OUR  
MAIN SUPPLIERS."**

*Olaf Allekotte*

**A weight reduction makes a big difference considering your production quantities. What is the course of such a development at RKV?**

There are always several steps taking place in parallel. We first discuss the moulds and preforms, and then the adaptations needed at our filling works. A change invariably multiplies along the entire production chain. An example: Four years ago we started to change over from big, heavy threads to short ones. As a first measure at the time we procured eleven new moulds for our then eleven injection moulding machines. Next, the whole periphery of the equipment and the filling tools were adapted to the new preforms. This was the biggest investment which RKV made in its history so far.

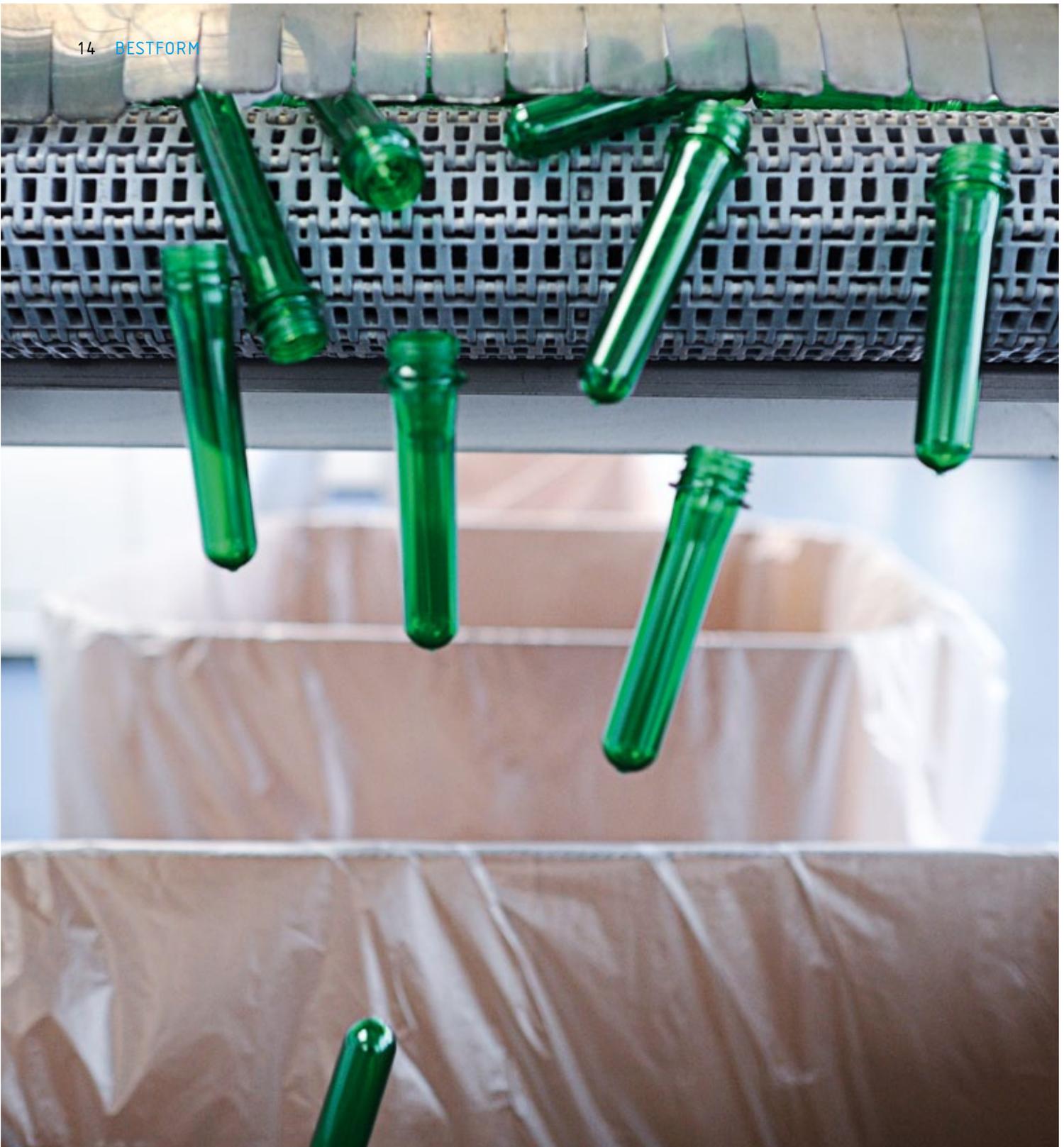
**What did the material reduction amount to?**

Since the beginning of the change to the PCO 1881 thread we revised one of our four standard weights on average >



"WE TREAT OUR EMPLOYEES  
AND SUPPLIERS IN THE MANNER WE  
WOULD LIKE TO BE TREATED  
OURSELVES."

Olaf Allekotte



once every two years. Compared with the start of the project we've been able to reduce the weight by approximately 30 per cent. Projected to our present annual production of 2.4 billion preforms this means a weight reduction of approximately 15,000 tons.

**Is the reduction of raw material a topic also in other areas?**

Thanks to our permanent research and development in the area of material consumption we currently process at least 50 per cent of regenerate. In combination with the preform

weight reduction this results in a saving of about 70 per cent of virgin material, on top of which comes an improved bottle stability.

**Where does the recycled material come from?**

Early in 2011 we incorporated an own recycling works in the group. By this we succeeded in completely closing the cycle of valuable material in which RKV plays an important part. The one-way PET bottles brought back to the Lidl subsidiaries can now be recycled and reused to 50 per cent in the production of RKV. Quite a boon for the environment,

considering that from the one-way PET bottle over the empties return to the newly filled bottle more than 98 per cent of the PET bottles are taken back within the deposit system and reused in reconditioned form.

**Do you see any alternatives to PET?**

Biological raw materials were discussed intensively some time ago. To use arable land for 'growing' raw materials for packaging products may be pondered critically. Our method in the MEG Group is a high recycling quota with lowest-possible but yet stable bottle weights and thereby also preforms.

**RKV supplies exclusively MEG which in turn belongs to the Lidl trading concern. How do you ensure that the drive experienced in the last ten years is maintained?**

For ten years we've been buying in about 10 to 15 per cent of the total preform requirements. In other words, we've had enough time to verify our marketability and obtain the certainty of our considerable investments paying off. For a year we've now been producing 100 per cent for all filling works of our group.



**RKV enters a major obligation with this exclusivity. How do you react to a short-term extra demand, for example in a hot summer?**

We compare the sales and production figures on a weekly basis. With approximately 50 million fillings per week a stock is used up within a few days.

**"IN 2001 NOBODY WOULD HAVE DARED TO FORECAST THAT WE WOULD NOW PRODUCE 2.4 BILLION PREFORMS."**

Olaf Allekotte

**What is RKV's relationship with suppliers?**

A well-balanced relationship is very important to us also in this respect. Discussions at eye level are the only promising recipe in my view for a successful cooperation in the long term. Mutual esteem is the basis on which trust and reliability can grow, and on the latter RKV must be able to count at all times. Irrespective of whether it is e.g. a problem during production, a delivery date or the new development of an injection mould.

**Where will RKV be after 20 years of operation?**

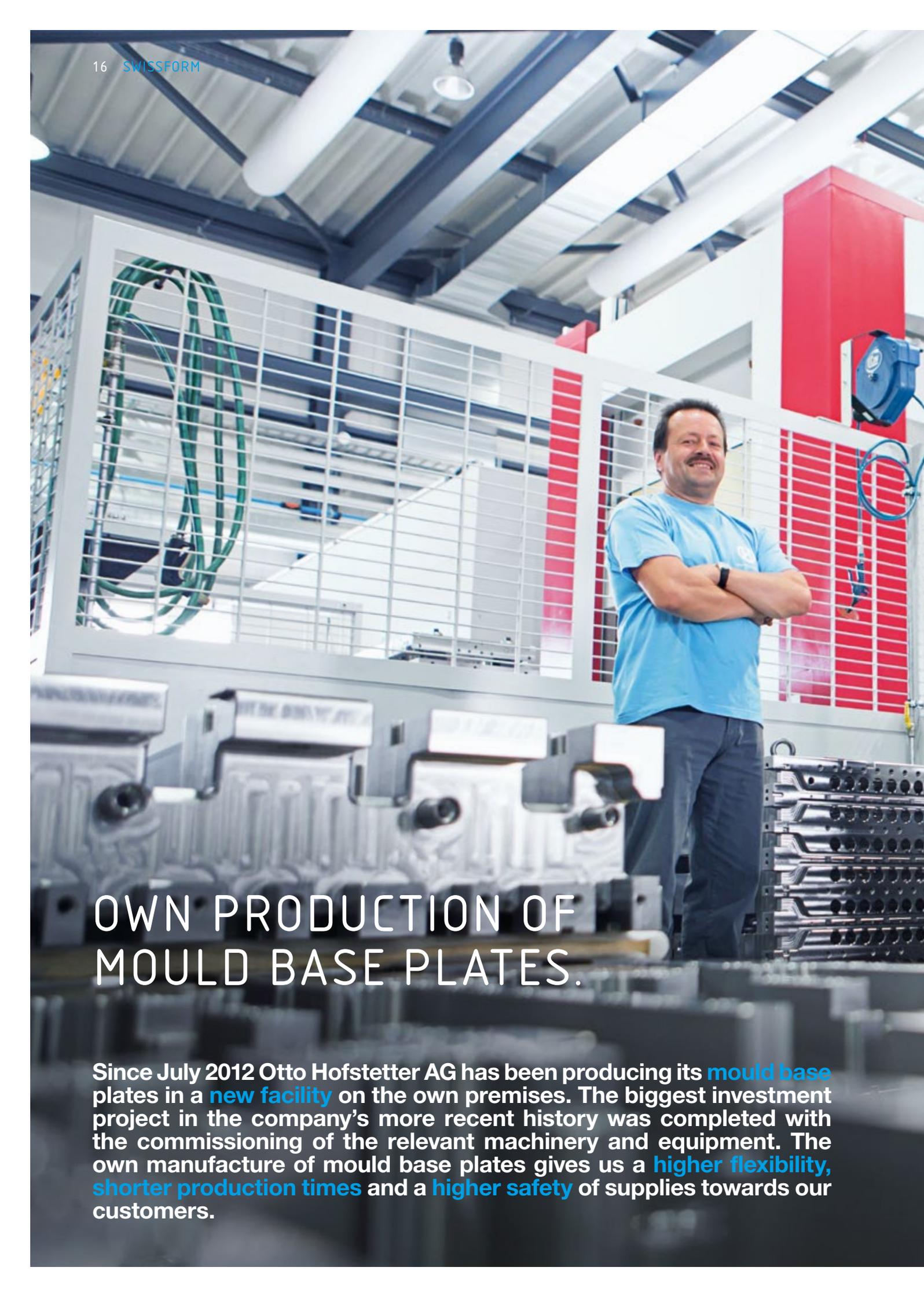
If we're allowed to continue working like so far, the company will be bigger still. It will expand the acquired competence in plastics to other areas and diversify its spectrum of products. RKV will continue to shape its future independently and develop in a long-lasting manner. Our enterprise will look differently already in 12 or 18 months from now. ■



Rosbacher Kunststoffverarbeitungs GmbH is part of the Mitteldeutsche Erfrischungsgetränke GmbH & Co. KG.

- Founded:** 2001
- Operations Manager:** Olaf Allekotte
- Employees:** 107
- Machinery:** 13 injection moulding machines with moulds of Otto Hofstetter AG, 4 machines for closures, 2 printing machines for closure printing
- Annual production:** 2.4 billion PET preforms and 1.6 billion closures
- Production:** 24/7 in 4-shift operation





## OWN PRODUCTION OF MOULD BASE PLATES.

Since July 2012 Otto Hofstetter AG has been producing its **mould base** plates in a **new facility** on the own premises. The biggest investment project in the company's more recent history was completed with the commissioning of the relevant machinery and equipment. The own manufacture of mould base plates gives us a **higher flexibility**, **shorter production times** and a **higher safety** of supplies towards our customers.



The new production hall is perfectly lit, spacious and spotless. It provides ample space for three large horizontal milling centres, a surface grinder and two high-precision vertical machining centres as well as various manual workstations. In full operation the hall is filled with a healthy drone. Albert Kuster, Department Manager for mould base plates, and Armin Vogt, Manager of the entire production, are proud of this new branch of the Hofstetter company.

#### **Solid basis is guaranteed.**

“The mould base plates provide the basic structure of our moulds. Five different plates of rustproof steel normally make up the mould base. Machining of these plates until they are ready for assembly requires highest precision. This in turn calls for a perfect infrastructure and well-trained personnel.” Albert Kuster claims that the new production hall with its machinery and skilled workers meets these prerequisites without compromise.

**“OUR SUPPLIERS  
COULDN'T COPE WITH THE STEP  
FROM THE 48-IMP. TO THE  
96-IMP. MOULDS.”**

*Albert Kuster, Department Manager for mould base plates*

#### **In the course of developments.**

Until the end of 1998 the base plates for the moulds were purchased from different suppliers. Like with all our partners, the company maintained long-standing relationships also with these firms. In those days the biggest moulds in the OH range featured 48 cavities and the base plates needed for them were bought from various partners. This changed shortly afterwards, when Otto Hofstetter AG launched the first 96-impression mould for PET. “Compared with the moulds built before then, the dimensions doubled in one step. It was a major challenge for all those involved”, adds Albert Kuster. The international market went for the big moulds right away. The very positive sales prospects gave us every reason to expect a doubling of the demand.

#### **New business model is wanted.**

The doubling of the cavities brought new specifications also for the procurement of the mould base plates. From one day to the next a different yardstick was applied to the subcontractors. For them the innovation step of Otto Hofstetter AG meant a higher output, shorter delivery times as well as more efficient machining of substantially bigger >

dimensions. Regrettably, all of them gave up in the face of this. Production Manager Armin Vogt sees the main reason for it in the need to invest in new machine tools, something which the budgets of the mostly smaller-sized firms didn't allow.

#### **Ambitious project.**

The Management of Otto Hofstetter AG soon realized that the best approach was to build up the own production of

The own production of mould base plates forms the basis for the precision of the moulds of Otto Hofstetter AG.



mould base plates. The basic facts, however, quickly brought us back down to earth: there were neither the machines, nor adequate premises, nor the specialized personnel at hand. But the project was started all the same. "The Management brought the ambitious project under way by employing me", remembers Albert Kuster, today's Department Manager. This was followed by an intensive evaluation of the equipment which was ordered in autumn 2000. What was still lacking then were the space and the qualified personnel. It took ten months for the large machines to be delivered, by which time all gaps had to be closed.

#### **Pioneering expansion.**

It worked! The production at Otto Hofstetter AG started at the end of 2001. Almost half of the plates were already made in rented premises. After the transition phase of one year the last bought-in plate was delivered. From this time onwards Otto Hofstetter AG produced all its mould base plates itself. Never before in the 60-year-old history of this family business were such high investments made in one single department within just one year. Nearly six million Swiss francs were needed for the expansion. Production Manager Armin Vogt is convinced "that this big project could only be realized in such a short time thanks to the Management's optimistic assessment of the company's future and the owner family's readiness to invest."

**"THE REALIZATION OF  
THIS PROJECT UNDERPINS THE  
MANAGEMENT'S CONFIDENCE AND  
THE READINESS TO INVEST."**

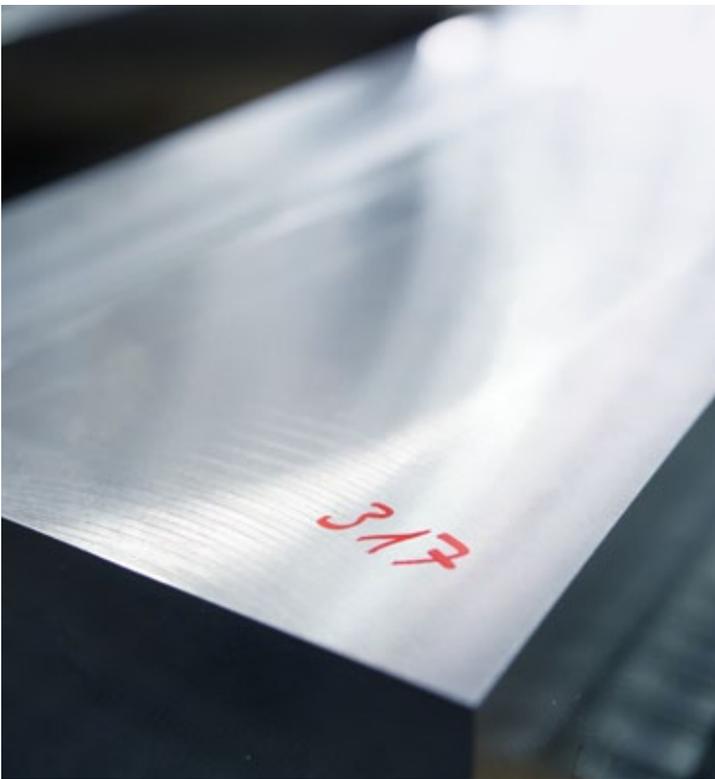
Armin Vogt, Production Manager

#### **Now inside the own four walls.**

After about seven years of highly satisfactory overall output rates and new market growth it became clear that the only just started production of mould base plates needed already a capacity increase. The Management decided for a new building on the space that was still free on the works site. Moreover, two big machines which normally last ten to twelve years had to be replaced. Because of the exceptionally high number of production hours they had already reached the end of their useful lives.

#### **Prepared for the future.**

The last expansion work was finalized in July 2012 and the production of mould base plates in the new building runs now



A raw hotrunner plate weighs up to 1,400 kilograms. After 100 production hours and the different machining stages it has lost up to 60 per cent of its original weight.

at full steam. Each of the three horizontal milling centres is equipped with an automatic pallet changer and a magazine holding 320 tools for direct access. The power trio currently provides an annual production performance of 15,000 operating hours. Thanks to a positioning accuracy of a phenomenal 0.008 mm on the X-Y-Z axis the base plates stand out by their highest precision. "With the dedicated own department and the powerful machinery the delivery times for 48-cavity moulds are now maximum six and for 128-imp. moulds only 10 weeks." Albert Kuster walks proudly through the production hall, and he has every reason for it. ■

## OTTO HOFSTETTER SHENZHEN LTD.: MUCH IS NEW IN THE FAR EAST.

The setting-up of Otto Hofstetter Shenzhen Ltd. in China progresses rapidly. In July we reached an important milestone on the road to our representation in the Middle Kingdom. At the end of the multi-stage process we were granted the official "Corporate Business Licence". At the same time we completed almost the entire infrastructure and started to train the local service technicians. This means that, with immediate effect, our customers in China can obtain spare parts and services from Otto Hofstetter Shenzhen Ltd.

Interested parties can get further information at any time from our local Operations Manager Mr Li Hong Fu by e-mail to [lih@otto-hofstetter.com](mailto:lih@otto-hofstetter.com).



The Operations Manager of Otto Hofstetter Shenzhen Ltd., Mr Li Hong Fu, looks after the interests of the Swiss parent company and is ready to inform customers and clients in China since July.



Otto Hofstetter Shenzhen Ltd. has been holding the Chinese business licence since July 2012. With the completion of the initial work the Hofstetter service and repair centre in China is thus operational. This shortens the reaction time considerably so that possible production downtimes at the customers' are markedly reduced.

 欧拓模具设备(深圳)有限公司  
Otto Hofstetter Shenzhen Ltd.



Otto Hofstetter AG



IMPERFECT FORMS NEED  
PERFECT PREFORMS TOO.



Our injection moulds are used to produce PET preforms for bottles of perfect quality. [www.otto-hofstetter.com/pet](http://www.otto-hofstetter.com/pet)