

THE ONE-STOP SHOP FOR PACKAGING FILM

A relative newcomer to the world of packaging film, SuperFilm is quickly becoming a force to be reckoned with, thanks to the millions of euros funnelled into its operation by its parent company Sanko. Having significantly expanded its technical capabilities in recent years and moved into hitherto untapped niches such as in-mould labelling or biopackaging, SuperFilm seems ready to take the market by storm. Oscar Del Santo talks to general manager Necdet Kileci and European manager David Haskins.



SuperFilm's ambitions go well beyond its native Turkey – as its strategically located commercial offices in Ohio and Luxembourg are there to prove. Originally focused on BOPP (biaxially oriented polypropylene), it now manufactures an all-encompassing range that includes BOPET (biaxially oriented polyester), CPP (cast polypropylene), BOPA (biaxially oriented polyamide) and multilayer barrier films.

SuperFilm was established in 1993 as a direct result of the diversification effort initiated by its parent company Sanko, one of the leading industrial groups in Turkey with more than 10,000 workers and a turnover in excess of €2 billion.

"Sanko was founded in 1904 as a small textile company and continued to be solely dedicated to textiles until the 1980s," Mr Kileci says. "Then a major programme of national and international expansion was launched and Sanko moved into novel areas such as construction, utilities, IT, automotive and others. I regard

SuperFilm as the result of a truly visionary effort on behalf of our parent company, which was prepared to support our operation with massive investment until we became the major profit-making packaging company we are today."

A quick look at SuperFilm's history should suffice to prove to any doubters that 'massive investment' is indeed no overstatement. In 1993 a 35,000m² facility was put at the disposal of SuperFilm to produce high quality BOPP film with state-of-the-art machinery by European standards. In 1997 capacity was doubled to reach 30,000 tons of BOPP film and 10,000 tons of metalised film per year after the purchase of three metalisers and two coating lines.

In 2004 Sanko made further large investments into its new offspring. The third BOPP line was acquired alongside the first multilayer cast line for multi-barrier films. By 2005 the third BOPP line had been brought on stream, the first BOPET line had been added and ▶

SuperFilm was able to produce up to 94,000 tons of packaging films in a site comprising 85,000m² of manufacturing space.

“The almost €80 million invested in the past year will enable us to move beyond the traditional OPP applications and into more technical areas,” David Haskins says. “August 2005 witnessed a bustle of activity in our company with the start-up of our BOPET film line with a capacity of up to 18,000 tons. With our third BOPP line we have added 40,000 tons to the original 30,000 and introduced a set of new specifications for not only the packaging but crucially the label market. Our state-of-the-art multilayer barrier and CPP film line adds 6000 tons to the mix and enables us to cater for sophisticated needs.”

“We may be the new kid on the block in European packaging,” he continues, “but we are certainly ready to leave our imprint in the world of European packaging films. We are already employing 514 people and have a respectable turnover of €90 million. Once our enhanced capabilities allow us to increase production these figures will grow substantially.”

On the technological front, SuperFilm uses the up-to-date gauge system to determine the thickness control of films. Quality control is carried out in accordance with ISO 9001 standards in their own quality control lab. A process control policy guarantees that samples are taken from each lot produced and tested to insure compliance with standards. Automation is supported with a barcoding control system to facilitate accurate shipment and delivery.

Exploiting gaps

The applications of the SuperFilm range of films are manifold and include packaging for food items such as biscuits, snack, chocolate bars, chewing gum and cakes, or the wrapping of non-food items such as cigarettes, tissue papers, CDs, and adhesive tapes that are used at home and at work.

David Haskins is excited about the chances offered by in-mould labelling technology and believes that exploiting this niche may give SuperFilm the edge over its competitors.

“With our advanced technology lines,” he explains, “we are able to produce an injection-mould designed range of films – like the white glossy high yield, transparent solid, matt and high-gloss BOPP films in the 50–80 micron range and CPP films in the range of 82–100 micron. All kinds of self-adhesive tape, wrap-around, cut-in-stack and general label applications are also available. I believe we are offering one of the most complete ranges of labels with multiple applications.

“We are waiting to be awarded a patent in these and related films – like the Supguard range of multibarrier film in various structures for thermoforming, medical uses or industrial applications that help to increase shelf life and are incredibly cost-effective. We are well placed to cater for most needs in an area with tremendous potential.”

Mr Kileci, on the other hand, is enthused by their new Supereco range of biodegradable films.

“The SuperEco films we have developed under the ‘Nature Pack’ umbrella name exemplify our desire to be at the forefront of the growth in biopackaging that is taking place in Europe,” he points out. “These polypropylene films are rendered degradable/biodegradable by a combination of heat and UV as a first step and subsequently the absorption of micro-organisms naturally present in soil. They end up as biomass in nature by a degradation process that is entirely non-hazardous.”

A Pan-European approach

This extended product range fits into the comprehensive strategic plan devised by Sanko to turn SuperFilm into the one-stop-shop for packaging films in the Old Continent.

“Pan-European growth is a key feature of our strategic plan for the next 15 years,” David Haskins explains. “In order to realise our desire to become a major European player we want ▷





to reach a production capacity of 175,000 tons by 2015. There is no doubt in my mind that there is going to be a surge in demand for products that offer distinct advantages like our Cast Barrier Supguard film.”

“This is the reason,” Mr Kileci interjects, “why we take R&D so seriously. A new project at a cost of €3 million has just been approved to research new types of polymers and applications for films. Our R&D department is made up by three university degree staff, a chemical engineer, a food technologist, a chemist and two technicians all employed on a full-time basis. A very significant percentage of our turnover is dedicated to R&D.”

Tangible results recently brought about by SuperFilm’s R&D department included the new film BOPMAR 1132 MD, coated with aluminium on one side and ideal for margarine and butter wrap, and improvements to the high-breathable film Suplain 1011 VH used for fresh fruits and vegetables. These innovations have earned SuperFilm a number of accolades at home and abroad.

“Bringing novelties and new applications into the market is crucial if we are to become

the suppliers of choice for the major converting groups.” Mr Haskins adds. “Many of them have highly specialised converting programmes in operation and we are one of the few suppliers that can put something together for them. I like to regard SuperFilm as the problem solver. We have established a fruitful dialogue with most converting groups on a global basis.

“On another front,” he goes on, “we are also working closely with traditional offset printers who are coming up with some interesting creative designs using UV-flexo ink with low odour, etc. There are very interesting trends emerging from the offset side and we intend to keep abreast of any developments. This is especially important for smaller orders with specific requirements. We are not limited to large orders and definitely want to have the flexibility to cater for smaller orders too.”

“This is partly why we have a mixed sales strategy in place,” Necdet Kileci explains. “In our efforts to reach every major area in Europe we have put in place a network of agents and distributors across the continent while keeping a permanent sales office in Luxembourg headed by David. We also have a permanent office near Columbus, Ohio in the US. Of course we are very strong in Turkey, where we account for just over 30% of the local market.”

“Elsewhere in Europe,” David Haskins points out, “we are very active all across the continent in countries such as UK, Germany, Italy, France, Spain, Greece and the Scandinavian countries. We are making great progress in eastern Europe, where the potential for us is simply huge. At present exports account for 60 per cent of our turnover and that figure is growing. We are serving major converter groups like Alcan, Amcor and Gerosa, and have a dialogue or trials with most of the other key converters in Europe and also with those end users like Nestlé, Unilever, Kraft, United Biscuits, Burtons etc who are very active in seeking new cost-effective solutions to their packaging demands. We do not want to be regarded as just a major national manufacturer neatly tucked away in Turkey. SuperFilm is destined to become a major reference in packaging films in Europe and provided we keep focused on innovation and quality I picture a most encouraging future for our company.” ■

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