

PRESS ARTICLE

Case Study

04/02/2016

SIDEL'S FASTEST 4 LITRE PET BOTTLING SOLUTION SEES SECOND LINE RUNNING FOR NONGFU SPRING



Following the success of the fastest-ever Sidel PET Combi line for 4 litre water bottles supplied to Nongfu Spring in 2014, the major Chinese bottled water producer has invested in a second Sidel bottling line to extend its production capacity even further.

Nongfu Spring water is one of the leading brands for natural mineral water in China. Drawn from natural water springs in various parts of China, Nongfu Spring's bottled water is today one of the most well known on the domestic market, commanding a 22% market share in China's competitive bottled water segment in 2013. In addition to the regular 380ml, 550ml and 1.5 litre PET bottle formats, the company's bottled water is also available in a 4 litre family size, which, until recently, was only available in HDPE (High Density Polyethylene). This was the starting point for Nongfu Spring's challenge to align the production of its bottles across the range by switching from HDPE to PET for its largest bottle size. The company turned to Sidel, the leading provider of production equipment and services for liquids in PET, to provide the optimum packaging solution through the introduction of a new Combi line. Early in 2014 Sidel supplied the fastest-ever Combi water line for the 4 litre PET bottle to Nongfu Spring running at 14,000 bottles per hour (bph).

An attractive and cost-effective 4 litre PET bottle

When Nongfu Spring decided to switch from HDPE to PET for its 4 litre bottles, the company was looking to create a bottle to stand out on the supermarket shelf. Nongfu Spring also wanted to achieve a more cost effective and sustainable production process for the family bottle format. The inherent properties of HDPE result in certain constraints in bottle design, lowering bottle appeal and perceived value for consumers. The PET bottle is fully transparent and light, requiring less material to produce and creating less waste compared to a HDPE bottle which lacks clarity and needs more material to manufacture. The PET bottling line also offers lower total cost of ownership through its capacity for higher production output than a HDPE line.

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A dedicated Combi to boost productivity

When Nongfu Spring decided to switch to PET, it came with very precise and specific technical requirements for the bottling line. The company wanted to increase its production capacity and efficiency to meet growing market demand for the 4 litre bottle, while also reducing production costs, therefore the specific request for high speed and line efficiency. Sidel engineers listened and understood the company's needs and proposed a unique and customised solution to match Nongfu Spring's expectations. Sidel proposed a bottling line at the required output of 14,000 bph, integrating blow, fill and cap functions in a single machine.

The Combi offers a reliable operational level that has enabled Nongfu to boost its overall productivity and maintain a competitive edge in supplying 4 litre water bottles. The Combi, manufactured in the Sidel Beijing plant, was fully tested in-house to ensure a fast installation and ramp-up in the Nongfu Spring production facility. This allowed validation of all the components and options specifically developed for Nongfu Spring.

The Combi line is dedicated to the family bottle size and achieves very high production. Sidel's strong project management was instrumental to the success of the installation, particularly given that the process was rather complex. There were several other third party companies involved - such as the suppliers of the conveyor system, labeller and carton casers - all of which had to be integrated into the line at the desired efficiency and output levels.

A second Combi PET line

Nongfu Spring's first PET 4 litre bottles were commercially launched in the Chinese market in 2014 and received a positive response from Chinese consumers. They met the growing market demand for such family-oriented packaging in China which registered a growth in sales of 53% in the 4 litre bottled water format in 2013. Since the launch of those PET bottles, Nongfu has seen its sales increase significantly in this market segment. Based on the success of this first line running in the main Nongfu Spring production site at the 'Lake of a thousand islands' (also known as Qiandaohu in Chinese), located just 350 km Southwest of Shanghai, the company renewed its confidence in Sidel by acquiring a second line based on the same Combi 14 technology. This second Sidel Combi is now running at 14,000 bottles per hour, enlarging Nongfu Spring's production capabilities while achieving a great level of performance.

About Nongfu Spring Water

Established in 1996, Nongfu Spring is best known for its natural spring water drawn from the 'Lake of a thousand islands'. Designated as one of China's most important tourist destinations, the lake spans an area of 573sq km, covering 1,079 islands. Although Nongfu Spring has developed several other natural springs subsequently, its site at the 'Lake of a thousand islands' remains the largest and is the most renowned.

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High quality water springs, combined with the use of some of the world's leading-edge bottling solutions, is one of Nongfu Spring's strongest value propositions. For each of its production sites, the company has built large-scale facilities dedicated to bottling water from natural springs. The water reaches the production line in its natural state, retaining the original taste and purity of the spring water.



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About Sidel

Our purpose is to help brands protect the product inside, preserve the planet outside and touch the lives of millions of people every day.

We do so by offering complete and modular PET packaging solutions, including people, services and equipment.

Sidel has over 165 years of industrial experience. With 30,000 machines installed in more than 190 countries, we have been helping producers fill beverage bottles for over 85 years, blow them for more than 50 and label them for more than 40. We have over 40 years of aseptic packaging expertise, and were one of the first companies to introduce PET bottles to the beverage industry over 35 years ago.

Part of the Tetra Laval group, Sidel has offices worldwide, including 8 production sites and 8 training centres. All our experts are committed to creating the optimum liquid-packaging solution.

We call it **A Better Match** - for our world, our customers and ourselves.

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