

PRESS ARTICLE

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SIDEL'S UNIQUE PREFORM FEEDER ENSURES EASY AND SAFE OPERATIONS



Sidel EasyFEED™ is an innovative, compact and safe ground-level preform feeder for PET production lines. Based on the Sidel Matrix™ standard architecture, it features a modular approach to preform feeder design. This patented technology ensures operators' safety and easier operations by significantly reducing the footprint and the height for preform infeed.

On a traditional preform feeder with rollers, preforms are lifted in an elevator column to heights between 5.5 to 6.5 metres before being sorted and transported by gravity on rollers to the blower. Operators are therefore tasked with carrying out production control, changeovers and maintenance at height - away from the relative safety of floor level. Given the risk involved, producers generally aim to limit this work at height, as they clearly need to minimise safety hazards for their workers.

Wanting to optimise the floor space of their production lines, manufacturers are also looking to reduce the footprint of the infeed process, all of that while ensuring maximised uptime and product quality. With these requirements in mind, Sidel engineers designed an industry-first, compact, ground-level infeed, as a safe and user-friendly solution. Based on the Sidel Matrix modular design, EasyFEED is suitable for all new Sidel SBO Matrix and SBO Universal™ blowing machines, Combi solutions and Super Combi, either new or already installed.

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Patented technology without rollers

The journey of the PET preforms starts in the hopper, where they are originally stored to supply the EasyFEED system. From there, they are lifted by an elevator column to a height of only 2.5 metres – the ground-level preform feeder being much lower than traditional systems. The preforms are then sorted and vertically driven into the bowl of a rotary unscrambler. They are positioned at the edge of a rotating table and transferred by their necks along the path. Still in a vertical position and supported by the neck flange, the preforms are moved onto a rail by a filtered airflow. Instead of traditional gravimetric infeed rails, the preforms are driven by two motorised, food-grade brush belts (one on each side of the preform body) up to the infeed blowing wheel.

Maximum production uptime and flexibility

The unique EasyFEED is optimal for high output speeds from 30,000 to 82,000 bottles per hour but is essentially a truly flexible solution that fits a wide range of production specifications in terms of preform design range and layout. The solution can handle a wide number of standard preforms. To adapt to the specifics of the customer's production site, the innovative feeding system can be custom-fit for each producer into a clockwise or counter-clockwise layout, where infeed is at 90° or 45° to the oven axis.

With availability above 99%, this innovative preform feeder improves production efficiency. The changeovers are very fast - taking up to 15 minutes - involving minimal manual operations and setting points. Minimum maintenance and fewer skills are needed as no parts require the application of grease and only three main parts need routine replacement. The fast and efficient ramp-up after changeovers and maintenance leads to a noticeable decrease in downtime.

Preform integrity through careful handling

Soft preform handling is essential for the final bottle quality. With EasyFEED, the minimal path inside the preform feeder - up to 27% less than in traditional systems - a very low preform fall and a limited preform recycling loop, all help in limiting the possibility of damage to the preforms. All along their path from rotary unscrambler to infeed, preforms are fully protected from dust, ensuring fully hygienic production from the start of the line. The smooth contact of the motorised brushes upon the bodies of the preforms also contributes to increased preform integrity.

Safe and easy to operate

Although capable of supplying PET production lines with very high speeds, Sidel EasyFEED significantly reduces the footprint up to 62% and height up to 56% compared to traditional preform infeed systems. This compact design helps drive down total cost of ownership (TCO) and

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allows for an easy implementation in the workshop, irrespective of space constraints in the production halls.

Working at ground level has many other key benefits for producers. Without the use of platforms or elevated walkways, the risk of operator injury caused by falls naturally decreases. The quick and easy access of EasyFEED for production setting and control makes changeovers and maintenance operations much simpler. The high visibility along the entire path taken by the pre-forms, from hopper to blower, permits easier monitoring for the operator and rapid intervention should it become necessary, therefore reducing downtime and increasing efficiency.

The high production flexibility and maximised uptime is also due to the dedicated pages for the new EasyFEED system, integrated into the Sidel Matrix blower's Human Machine Interface (HMI), ensuring a truly intuitive navigation, with quick setting points and immediate response time.

More information on Sidel EasyFEED: <http://www.sidel.com/easyfeed>.



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About Sidel Group

The Sidel Group is formed by the union of two strong brands, Sidel and Gebo Cermex. Together, we are a leading provider of equipment and services for packaging liquid, food, home and personal care products in PET, can, glass and other materials.

With over 37,000 machines installed in more than 190 countries, we have nearly 170 years of proven experience, with a strong focus on advanced systems, line engineering and innovation. Our 5,000+ employees worldwide are passionate about providing complete solutions that fulfil customer needs and boost the **performance** of their lines, products and businesses.

Delivering this level of performance requires that we continuously **understand** our customers' challenges and commit to meeting their unique goals. We do this through dialogue, and by understanding the needs of their markets, production and value chains. We complement this by applying our strong technical knowledge and smart data analytics to support maximum lifetime productivity to its full potential.

We call it **Performance through Understanding**.

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