

PRESS ARTICLE

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Cermex FlexiPack ensures agile packing of wine and spirits bottles



New formats and a growing number of SKUs are pushing the boundaries of production scalability in the wine and spirits industries. For the critical moment of packing glass bottles in American cases, Sidel is now introducing an agile, auto-adjustable Pick & Place case packer – Cermex FlexiPack – which improves flexibility and overall ease of operations, while providing total protection of the primary packaging. It does that by enabling 10-minute changeovers and by offering enhanced bottle flow management.

“Today, both the wine and spirits markets are presenting a very fragmented product offering,” says Olivier Goffin, Vice President Global Accounts Beer, Wine and Spirits at Sidel. “While this necessarily leads to shorter production runs, it cannot come at the expense of brand equity and product integrity, as both aspects are key components for the attractiveness and differentiation of products. Consumers are increasing the pace by which they expect to try new references, new packaging and new tastes with boundaries across drink categories quickly blurring. Brand owners are responding to this development by expanding their portfolio.”

At production level, this trend creates very clear consequences: the brand image is more and more relying on the container’s look and feel, with bottle decoration deserving maximum care while changeovers are expected to be more and more frequent and smooth. Product integrity becomes particularly critical at the secondary packaging stage, as bottles have to be handled with care when conveyed to the infeed of the packing system, selected, gripped and then inserted into the case. Lastly, new format creation is to be managed easily and autonomously.

Contact:

Public Relations

Tel: +39 0521 999 452

press@sidel.com

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“All in all, bottling operators ask for a great level of agility with highly automated changeovers and an easy operability at all steps to successfully manage their packaging operations today and tomorrow,” Olivier adds.

10-minute changeovers thanks to the auto-adjustable gripping head

This is why Sidel is introducing Cermex FlexiPack, a new Pick & Place case packing solution for glass bottles, which combines robotic technology and market expertise that has been accumulated over more than 45 years of serving the alcoholic drinks industry.

Particularly suited to handle between 10,000 and 18,000 bottles per hour, this piece of equipment has been designed with a high dose of flexibility and operability in mind for each of its sub-modules; namely, a bottle channel infeed, a numerical-axis gantry manipulator and its RSC (Regular Slotted Container) case conveying part (i.e. the case infeed, loading and outfeed). In addition, it can be complemented by an upstream DiviArm, which is a positive bottle distribution system allowing limited pressure and zero shocks when the bottles are divided into the packer infeed channels – for maximum product integrity.

The improved agility and ease of operations of the solution manifest themselves in a number of features: for example, a high level of automatic adjustments and lighter re-designed parts enable ergonomic, reliable, repeatable and tool-less changeovers completed in less than ten minutes. Didier Saussereau, Packing Product Manager at Sidel, further explains, “Cermex FlexiPack handles a wide variety of bottles’ diameters and heights, always paying utmost attention to product integrity. Different bottle necks or cap designs do not represent any issue, as the end grippers can be easily and quickly changed. All movements are brushless to smooth the product flow at all times as well as allow fully automatic adjustments for changeovers.” What is more, a single servo-driven auto-adjustable gripping head ensures a frictionless and precise batch gripping and transfer of 24 to 48 bottles simultaneously.

“For greater accessibility and ease-of-use, the solution comes with the latest version of our user-friendly HMI (Human Machine Interface), helping operators with statistics, diagnostic and maintenance procedures, all available through a tablet-based navigation,” Didier highlights. The HMI also guides the operator step-by-step for any new format creation while automatically generating the respective changeover settings, therefore increasing autonomy and maximising uptime.

From bottle integrity to decoration: Total product care via improved flow management

The innovative flow and speed management at every step of the packing process protects the glass bottle and its label. Noise reduction is also achieved by limiting the pressure and shock

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the bottles are subjected to at every step of production. No friction is a rule when the bottles are positively distributed in either three or four lanes via the DiviArm divider.

In addition, FlexiPack features a unique batch collation ensured by a succession of four conveying zones, each one operating at a different speed: the batch is ultimately created at the fourth conveying section by an accompanying end-stop bar, which smoothly transfers the bottles to the picking station. This, too, helps minimise the shocks, thus guaranteeing maximum product protection.

Increased energy efficiency and compactness for lower TCO

Sidel's new auto-adjustable Pick & Place case packer also saves energy. It does that by employing lighter materials for the gripping head, thus reducing its weight and, as a consequence, the energy consumed by the manipulator. Furthermore, Cermex FlexiPack significantly limits the usage of compressed air thanks to the replacement of all pneumatic actuators with electrical ones. Projected for a production run of five years, the generated savings could reach up to 10,000 kWh, which is equal to 3.5 t of CO₂.

For greater performance, and as an alternative to DiviArm, Sidel's innovative contactless conveying and accumulation solution, Gebo AQFlex®, can feed the appropriate number of channels of Cermex FlexiPack to get a more compact layout and possibly add buffering time to the line.

More information on Cermex FlexiPack: sidel.com/flexipack



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For editorial, advertising and sponsorship enquiries, please contact:

F&H Porter Novelli
Katherina Riesner, Consultant
Tel: +49 (0) 89 121 75 180
Email: sidel@fundh.de

For any other enquiries, please contact:

Sidel
Lucia Freschi, Public Relations Manager
Tel: +39 0521 999452/Cell: +39 3472632237
Email: lucia.freschi@sidel.com

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Sidel is a leading provider of equipment and services solutions for packaging beverage, food, home and personal care products in PET, can, glass and other materials.

With over 40,000 machines installed in more than 190 countries, we have nearly 170 years of proven experience, with a strong focus on the factory of tomorrow with advanced systems, line engineering and innovation. Our 5,500+ employees worldwide are passionate about providing solutions that fulfil customer needs and boost the **performance** of their lines, products and businesses.

Delivering this level of performance requires that we stay flexible. We continuously ensure we **understand** our customers' changing challenges and commit to meeting their unique performance and sustainability goals. We do this through dialogue and by understanding the needs of their markets, production and value chains. In turn, we apply our solid technical knowledge and smart data analytics to ensure lifetime productivity reaches its full potential.

We call it **Performance through Understanding**.

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