

PRESS ARTICLE

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In India, ITC pioneer a hyper flexible Sidel complete aseptic PET line with many firsts



One of India's foremost private sector companies, ITC, recently introduced a brand new range of milk-based drinks with fruit pieces while expanding their juice portfolio with a variety of premium 100% Indian fruit, 0% concentrate and 0% preservative juices. With both they trusted Sidel and their proven expertise in aseptic packaging, investing in a complete line, featuring the first dry preform sterilisation in India. Besides helping this manufacturer to gain greater productivity and flexibility, Sidel designed and tested their three new PET bottle formats for absolute food safety and powerful packaging differentiation on retailers' shelves.

ITC Limited, founded in 1910, are a leading company in the Indian market. With a gross sales value of ten billion US dollars and a diversified portfolio covering many industry sectors – food and beverage, packaging, agriculture and hospitality services, among others – ITC are headquartered in Kolkata (West Bengal) and employ 34,000 people today. This innovation-driven company apply a holistic approach of 'Integrated Crop Engagement' to their products, thus meeting the most stringent international food safety standards. In addition, they have received several certifications for their organic and sustainable farm practices.¹

Surfing the healthy consumer wave in India

Indians are more and more looking for 'better-for-you' beverage options, which are offering added nutritional benefits on a daily basis. Busy and stressful lifestyles are increasingly

¹ <https://www.itcportal.com/>

Contact:

F&H Porter Novelli
Tel: +49 (0) 89 12175 123
sidel@fundh.de

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representing the rule for the majority of the Indian population, who is looking for convenient ways to cope with their time constraint and is willing to pay a premium for so-called 'naturally healthy' beverages in small formats.

Recognising this shift in consumer preferences, ITC recently decided to expand their product range to include liquid dairy products: they launched *Sunfeast Wonderz Milk*, a new milk-based drink bottled in PET. Available in 200 ml and 300ml formats, it is offered in four different flavours: Vanilla Milkshake, Mixed-fruit Milkshake, Mango Milkshake and Badam² Milkshake. In parallel, they added a portfolio of premium Not From Concentrate (NFC) juices with source certified premium fruits to their existing *B Natural* brand. The portfolio includes the exotic range of Himalayan Mixed Fruit, Ratnagiri Alphonso Mango and Dakshin Pink Guava, making it the first fruit beverage brand in India to provide a portfolio of source certified fruit beverages with 100% Indian Fruit, 0% Concentrate without any preservatives to their customers.

To make this move, ITC needed a highly flexible PET packaging solution. "Strengthening innovation across the organisation is a key business imperative for us in these times of rapid business change and heightened competition. It also ensures that we enlarge our market share, create brand differentiation and are future-ready. All of that while pursuing 'Responsible Competitiveness' – a socio-economic-environmental framework that is pushing us to always guarantee that growth is sustainable and inclusive," explains Rajesh Ponnuru, Category Manager Juices and Dairy at ITC Limited.

Much more than pioneering a packaging innovation in India

ITC widened their nutritional drinks portfolio by expanding the packaging material choices supporting their *B Natural* juices and by launching the new *Sunfeast* liquid dairy products in PET. The resulting aseptic complete line project was a first in many ways: it was the first time that ITC partnered with Sidel, the very first time they entered the dairy-based beverage market and the first time UHT milk-based drinks with fruit pieces were launched in India leveraging the benefits of aseptic PET production with dry preform decontamination.

"Our global leadership in this field, based on more than 40 years of expertise and more than 150 references of our Aseptic Combi Predis installed worldwide, was also a key driver for ITC's decision, further strengthened via the opportunity of taking care of the process phase through Tetra Pak Processing System (TPPS) technologies," says Gaurav Kumar, Project Manager Execution, Global Key Accounts at Sidel. "We are really proud to be the first ones in India to leverage the benefits of aseptic PET production with dry preform decontamination," continues Rajesh Ponnuru from ITC. "This unique system perfectly supports the complete aseptic PET

² In Hindi, almonds are referred to as Badam.

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solution Sidel provide to us, offering flexibility, sustainability and efficiency. Plus, the Predis system uses no water and very little chemicals during production.”

Expert advice along every step of the aseptic PET packaging value chain

ITC chose PET because this packaging material facilitates the creation of more innovative and functional packages, thus helping the leading Indian player surf the rapid changes that are happening in the local market by gaining a competitive edge through product differentiation. The latter aspect was especially important for them, as the majority of milk products in the country are packaged in pouches, glass bottles and cartons. Bottled in PET and decorated with colourful sleeve labels, the *B Natural* and *Sunfeast* products immediately gained a distinctive look and feel while providing an enhanced brand experience, therefore receiving a very positive response from local consumers.

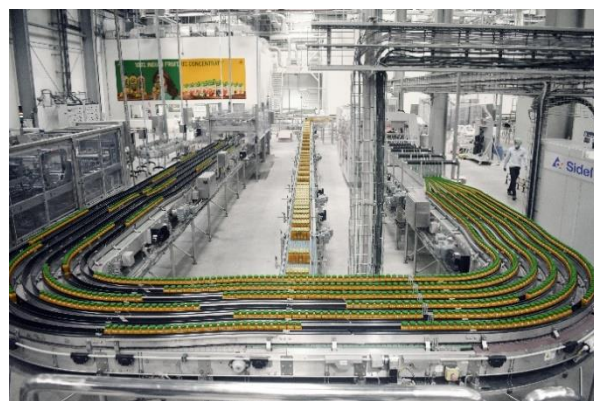
As ITC were unfamiliar with aseptic PET production, Sidel provided them thorough advice along every step of the supply chain. “The experience they have shown around packaging, beverages and raw materials was key in winning our trust,” highlights Rajesh Ponnuru. The customer visited Sidel’s centre for packaging expertise in Octeville-sur-Mer (France) multiple times to check the new bottle designs, developed around two main shapes – round and squared, the latter representing another first in this project; the first squared PET beverage bottle offered to Indian consumers.

Moreover, Sidel’s Liquid Package Interaction (LPI) laboratory ran shelf life tests on a number of juice and milk-based recipes to simulate real life distribution conditions and ensure, in advance, the products’ quality, safety, and organoleptic properties. The resulting insights helped ITC decide, which recipes to launch on the market and which PET barrier material to choose; the goal being to protect their dairy drinks and juices against microorganism growth and alterations caused by the effects of light, oxygen and temperature. To meet the highest food safety standards and ensure a 6-months shelf life, Sidel’s packaging scientists recommended the customer to use an O₂ PET barrier for their milk-based product range and an O₂ – combined with a light – barrier to protect their 100% organic juices.

“To find out more about aseptic PET production with dry preform decontamination, we decided to visit a similar installation in Indonesia. During this visit, we had the opportunity to experience the Aseptic Combi Predis in action and talk with operators,” says Rajesh Ponnuru. Based on this positive experience, ITC’s order for the Sidel complete aseptic PET line was placed. The scope includes Tetra Pak Processing System (TPPS) technologies and, as the heart of the line, the Aseptic Combi Predis complemented by Capdis™, the company’s dry cap decontamination system. The line also features a RollQuattro labeller, a sleever, packing and stretch wrapping systems, a PalKombi palletiser and EIT® (Efficiency Improvement Tool), with the latter one significantly improving production efficiency.

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The aseptic PET complete line – operational since early 2019 – was installed in a new area of the ITC production site in Kapurthala (Punjab) and laid-out to account for production operations and raw material logistics. It ensures the highest level of ease of operations and maintenance, hygiene and food safety while offering outstanding flexibility to switch easily from one product to another.



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For editorial, advertising and sponsorship enquiries, please contact:
F&H Porter Novelli
Nikolaus Schreck, Senior Consultant
Tel: +49 (0) 89 12175 123
Email: sidel@fundh.de

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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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