

Showtime in Istanbul

Many at Istanbul's Eurasia Packaging Fair 2015 have European export expansion plans so they can build secure markets for sustainable growth. *Joanne Hunter* reports

Where East meets West, Turkey's packaging industry sees expansion into European markets as a route towards greater stability and sustainable growth, and as technical proficiency reaches to the highest international standards the benefits will flow both ways.

On a visit to a Eurasia Packaging Fair, your eyes and ears tell you that customers can expect the best and can't ask too much from their Turkish suppliers. This annual event gives the domestic industry a guaranteed four days to meet customers, to see what rivals have been up to over the year and to be seen. But there's always potential for new business arriving from Turkey's western and eastern flanks, chances to gain alternative markets in countries and regions with generally more stable economies.

Industry export/import data for the first six months of 2015 pointed to a foreign surplus of around \$202m and a 14% volume growth in packaging product exports compared with the same period in 2014. The figures please Aslihan Arikan, general secretary of the The Turkish Packaging Manufacturers Association, which with Reed Tüyap co-organises the annual show that runs alongside Printpack, Food-Tech and SweetTech.

Arikan commented that visitor numbers tend to peak in the years between major international events. This, the Fair's 21st edition, topped 50,000 visitors with one in every 10 of them coming from outside Turkey. Is the trip to Istanbul worthwhile? A senior executive from a European paper manufacturer gave *Packaging News* a positive testimonial, rating his own experience "as good as Interpack", holding up a pile of "quality" name cards of potential customers to prove it.

On their home turf it gives a sense of what forging a successful business relationship means in Turkish terms. To quote one exhibitor: "Business is not just business, it's personal." Another recounted a story of how a new business venture grew spectacularly because that company has earned the loyalty of a strong customer base.

The drive is strong to outshine the competition, in all senses of the word. Elif Plastik Ambalaj specialises in flexible films and special effects printing and enjoyed multiple wins in the Turkish industry's 2015 Crescent and Stars awards. The company caims to be the first in Turkey to own the holographic machinery capable of producing the effect of waves, stars, fireworks and numerous others. The technology is reportedly "not commonly used in Europe" and subject to a two-year exclusive supplier agreement until 2016. The decorative finish is said to be popular with Arabic customers in feminine hygiene and baby care markets, and for retail shopping bags. ElifFine, a tactile film "based on natural material" with the feel of paper was also on show.

Ceren Ofset provides a full service in corrugated display packaging including aisle-end displays, a product line introduced earlier this year which already represents 15% of total business profits. Spotting the

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Sarten's supermarket lookalike booth: A treasure trove of plastic and metal packaging

opportunity for lucrative campaigns “marketers are becoming more courageous” says sales and marketing manager Feyzan Avci, and the trusted Ceren name, the prices and its customer service also play their part. The company was set up 15 years ago by two brothers inspired by their success selling “carton hats” to football fans for fun and at the beginning learned what they needed to know from customers. Ambitious to reach new European markets, in recent months Ceren has begun selling into Austria and Bulgaria and launched a new website that communicates in English to potential customers.

Inciler Industrial exports vacuum packaging machinery under the Invac brand to Germany, The Netherlands, Portugal, Slovenia, Russia, Ukraine, Algeria, Iran, Israel, Libya, Morocco and Saudi Arabia. Now it wants to break into the British market, says export sales executive Namik Kemal Agur and is looking for a suitable local product distributor as well as potential UK food importer customers. Eurasia Packaging is all the more important as a shop window for the smaller Turkish business because economic factors make exhibiting away from home very costly. But Agur sees European export as key to his company’s growth and stability and insists going out to meet future customers at trade shows is a necessary expense.

High value labels

The superlative visual impact of labels made from wood was an attention-grabber for their Turkish producer. These labels for glass applications “are not ordinary” says Setag Group general manager Gürbüz Erenoğlu and up to now he hasn’t yet seen their kind anywhere else in Europe. Due to cost, their likeliest uses are in high-value products, such as special ranges of organic oil and wine. The particular nature of the surface calls for digital print technology, and a substrate close to 80-90 micron needs strong adhesive and Setag’s expert technical handling. Company capabilities run to six-colour rotary, seven-colour digital, four-colour for piggyback labels, 12-colour letterpress, printing on metallised paper and special varnish technology.

Clients in the valuable premium product segment are sought after by the country’s five biggest printers and help push the frontiers of quality. One of them, Colorist Academy works with brands including Nivea skincare, Evyap baby goods and Bioxin cosmetics and pursues the perception of quality through the senses. Everything in the packaging gallery was picture-perfect, alluring and free of blemishes, supporting promises made by the products inside.

Among the best-staged displays, Sarten’s high-impact supermarket lookalike booth was a treasure trove of plastics and metal packaging designed for a strong shelf presence. Beyond having outstanding structural and graphical components, consideration for the user is very evident; food tubs have features for ease of opening, for example. Among a haul of awards, Sarten won Gold for a fridge-to-table Feta cheese container combining translucent body and lid with a large-surface labelling area. In the non-foods category, a Cronos brand industrial oil container took Bronze for a design offering a high top-load resistance in a lighter weight PET bottle, achieved by sharing the axial load equally between the cap and handle.

Turkey’s packaging industry goes to ingenious lengths to help brand customers win consumers. A differentiating pack for Turkish sweet confection Koska Helva has a hexagon-shaped bottom and interior foil seal to extend shelf-life, resulting in a Competency Award for Üzge Plastik.

Looking for indications of brand design trends across the display of award winners, there is an apparent lean towards the classic and simply elegant and away from the ornateness associated with Middle Eastern aesthetics. An industry with global aspirations and consumers set on developing western-type lifestyles and tastes makes the changing face of packaging inevitable.

Metal and glass packaging seems to perform strongly in a Turkish consumer market attracted by colour and shine. Glitzy, gleaming metallic surfaces come into their own under store lighting – it’s like shopping in glorious technicolour – and glass is chosen for its ability to let the natural colours shine through.

A distinctive shape won over the panel doling out awards. In a clever twist, a new glass bottle design by Şişecam Cam for a Gagoz-branded soft drink gives a nod towards the beverage can. Its profile is shaped very much like a can with the neck of the bottle drawn out



of it and topped with a crown cork cap. A Silver winner, it was pipped at the post by two Gold-winning Şişecam Cam stablemates. One for turnip juice takes a familiar, conical carafe-type form with an easy-grip neck and squared base. The other is described as “the first custom-designed, ergonomic, stylish and environmentally friendly bottle in the Aryan world” for a premium dairy ‘shake’. The company also added two Competency Awards to its haul, for Istanbul Vodka and Sirma Içetea.

Eco Plast produces films for industrial applications and retail packaging, specialising in foods and hygiene products. It offers a full complement of blown and cast film machinery and up to eight-colour printing capability. The company is just seven years old and, signalling its confidence, a few months ago took the plunge and began producing cast and stretch films. This recent addition of two blown-film machines, two cutting machines and two printers supplied by Windmoeller and Hoelscher has been a massive investment in dried foods packaging, doypags and flow-wrapping says Özlem Akçi, export department executive at Eco Plast.

International flavour

The show also adds international exhibitors to the mix and one, from Korea, brought a new-concept film in a packaging prototype to market-test among visitors to the stand. The development by Sun Yang is three-layer hygroscopic film designed to help extend food shelf-life. The technology was shown in a zippered bag. Foreign sales general manager Chul-Ho Noh says that the film’s inner layer absorbs humidity or moisture and has a deodorant function to get rid of the odour of oxidation trapped inside a bag of fresh fruit or vegetables. In an unscientific home-test to check the claim, broccoli florets inside an Onggibag stayed green and not at all smelly for a couple of weeks. There is a metallised version suitable for dried foods. Electronic products also offer market possibilities.

Exhibiting under the Korea Packaging Association umbrella, Sun Yang also promoted a polyethylene (PE) based multilayer film for re-sealing a tray or container several times. Prepared salad is one of the target uses. The adhesive layer incorporates a “secret formula” which Noh says can be adjusted to the adhesive strength that a customer wants it to be.

There is much to admire in Turkish packaging, the range of competency and not least the work ethic. “We produce with effort and love” is the motto of Ceren Ofset and the sentiment was expressed in different ways by exhibitor after exhibitor. Individual companies presented to a very high standard, and together amplified the message that Turkey can match European production expectations and compete on price and service with suppliers in other parts of the world. ■



Inciler Industrial’s export sales executive Namik Kemal Agur at Eurasia Packaging Fair