

Smarting Investment Boost Capacity for Wipes & Traditional Sectors

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The Brazilian subsidiary of Germany's Saertex Group is on track to increase investment capacity by 200% to 15,000 metric tons of non-woven (NW) material this in Indaetuba, São Paulo by year's end, to serve traditional segments as well as the wiper industry, according to Christian Koeniger, the general manager of Saertex USA, based in Waukesha, WI.

Speaking from Indaetuba, near the industrial belt of Campinas, Koeniger commented that "We see that there are some difficult economic factors to overcome here, including stagnation, but we are very excited to see that the Brazilian market is continuing to grow." He declined to value the expansion of the plant or to describe the new production configuration.

Among the target industries for the new production is Brazil's world class automotive industry—expected to produce 4.2 million units this year—industrial, maritime and other transportation segments, Koeniger notes. Among these, one of the fastest markets is the wiper industry, use of nonwovens in the production of turbine blades.

The Brazilian government introduced renewable energy incentives in 2009, which have led to the development of close to 100 medium sized farms, according to a March 2014 report by the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs. The agency noted that Brazil is the most promising country in Latin America for wind development and predicted that Brazil can be considered the most promising market for wind energy in Latin America. Brazil is expected to expand its installed base by 2 GW per year until 2020, building from an estimated wind potential of a massive 300 GW.

The U.S. National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) estimates that blades represent 14% of the total cost of a 1.5 MW wind turbine, and that the global market for turbine blades was 70,000 units in 2012. NREL also estimated that the cost of a 40 meter blade produced in Brazil was only \$126,000 compared with \$142,000 in the U.S., as of December 2012.

The two leading turbine blade producers in Brazil thus far are Tecos, which has turbine jobs in Brazil's Bahia, the world's third largest manufacturer of airplanes, and Avon Energy, the Dutch report indicates. Foreign suppliers of wind farms in Brazil must contend with local content laws, which are becoming increasingly restrictive. Beginning in January 2014, growth, pro-

ducer and finally full induction generator (FIG) parts used in turbine models that include a gearbox had to be produced within the country. By 2016, more than 70% of the turbine components must be produced in Brazil.

Saertex, in partnership with Avon Blades and production specialist IRE of Boston University, along with the support of the German Development Ministry, is developing the Migaerac compact building technology project for wind turbine blade manufacturing. The project involves the use of automated two-dimensional layering of individual NW layers, subsequently shaped using 3D profile technology. Saertex won the composite industry's 3D Innovation Award for 2014 for work on Migaerac.

Fliese continues South American expansion

Fliese expanded under Fliese continued in October it would continue to invest in the South American market. After making several major announcements regarding expansion during the past 18 months, the company said it would build a new non-wovens manufacturing site, with room for multiple lines, in São Paulo, Brazil. The first line to be built in this facility will be a state-of-the-art spun-lay line capable of making 20,000 tons of material per year. This new line will begin commercial operation during the first quarter of 2015. This site will be Fliese's second Brazilian operation; the company has operated in Germany, Brazil since 2006.

Elsewhere in South America, Fliese announced it will soon add 500 tons to its existing capacity in Lima, Peru, which was added three years ago when Fliese was still involved in a joint partnership with Filacraft.

Kansan Sees Growth in the Latin American Wipes Market

In last couple of years, the Latin American wet wipes market has shown remarkable growth. As a result of growing middle class and lifestyle changes, nonwovens industry players have invested significantly.

A global complete wet wipe production technologies supplier, Kansan has already provided machines in the Latin American market and is currently present in Mexico, Peru, Argentina and is negotiating with clients in other countries as well.

Despite the absence of bilateral trade agreements, Kansan was able to provide state-of-the-art machines and client-focused service. According to Huseyin Karanfil, area sales manager at Kansan, offering the service in official languages and understanding the commercial needs of clients are essential then success comes through presenting customized solutions.

According to Karanfil, increased purchasing and a growing middle class are the key factors it sees aiding to growth in Latin America. These trends have led investors to plan new projects.

In the wipes market, baby wipes continue to both dominate and show significant growth but personal care and cleaning wipes are growing steadily and even adult wipes are starting to appear in the local market.

"This is being driven mainly by rising middle class and lifestyle changes," Karanfil says. "When baby wipes take a solid place in the market and become a basic everyday product, wet wipe manufacturers try to differentiate their product by creating new segments. Indeed, growth creates new chances and challenges."

Key among these challenges is a limited supply of spunlace fabric and a near complete lack of locally made airlaid nonwovens. This had led to high production costs for wipes makers using nonwovens.

Kansan machines are flexible to operate with different types of materials, and clients are able to work with wide range of raw materials, according to the company.

U.B. Fuller Expands in Colombia

U.B. Fuller recently opened a new \$10 million manufacturing facility to support the expansion of its business in the Andean Region of South America. The plant is located in Bogotá, approximately 30 kilometers east of Medellín, Colombia.

The 20 years, U.B. Fuller has had a strong and growing presence in the Andean Region's adhesive market, operating from a manufacturing facility in Bogotá before moving to its new 20,776 square meter plant in Bogotá. The new site will provide increased production capacity, a new technical laboratory for hygiene products and better access to the country's second largest airport.

"This facility represents a continued commitment to our customers, shareholders, local community and to our employees, who have worked so hard to bring this investment to life," says Tracy Jensen, senior vice president, American Region. "It is a sign of the important role this business and geography play in our strategic plan for the region and for U.B. Fuller."

The Bogotá facility will supply hot melt and water based adhesive technologies for the hygiene, packaging, and corrugate and security markets. In addition to production, the facility houses administrative offices, labs, and receiving and dispatching. The new hygiene technical laboratory will help meet the demands of the region's growing consumer hygiene market and provide value to U.B. Fuller's principal customers

who have a presence there.

"The region's economy is growing, and we want to take advantage of the opportunities the market has to offer as well as support our customers' long-term success here," Jensen adds. "Our capital investment is an acknowledgment of our confidence in the region. It will allow us to bring more value to our relationships and enhance our competitive position."

Stroff

Stroff was founded in 1962 by Charles Cobalt. The company's initial business was manufacturing conditioners and purchasing natural cotton from the pharmacy. With time, the company grew and started purchasing cotton from 3M to the point where the president of Johnson & Johnson came to visit its biggest cotton customers.

"Then, another company started making polypropylene (PP) and we started buying from them. As our volume was considerably large, we started distributing Stroff in the plant where we began making it internal," says Massimo Cobalt. "We rapidly grew adding more and more production lines. Today, we produce a wide array of products serving many different segments in the non-wovens industry such as Stroff for conditioners, upholstery and air blades."

Stroff also produces a full and complete line of thermal and acoustic insulation that are steadily replacing fiberglass in dry-wall, ceiling boards, decorative 3D printed noise-absorbing boards, wall panels and under roof thermal insulation as well as a line of green generator cable insulation as well as automotive noise insulation.

Since 1995, the company has made nonwovens like used for under mattresses, wall cloth, shoe cover rolls, PVC backing, automotive under carpet and interior covering, fabric media for painting rollers as well as other applications relevant to the process.

Program Finalized for Outlook Plus Latin America

The two global nonwovens trade associations, ENWNA and ANWA, have finalized the program for Outlook Plus Latin America 2015. The first two days of the inaugural three-day conference and exhibition, March 3-5, in São Paulo, Brazil, will examine market, product and technology intelligence for hygiene and personal care. The third day caps the event with a unique new focus on durable nonwovens applications and future opportunities.

The keynote presenter, Roberto Maradei, Ph.D., will lead the conference with global and regional economic prospects for the Mercosul Region (Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay and Venezuela). The conference will also highlight latest developments in nonwovens and advanced hygiene products for these markets and new trends and analysis of components and raw materials led by senior management and industry experts.

More information: www.enwna.org www.anwa.org