

## case study

## Whisky galore

Excel Automation has completed all four phases of a contract to upgrade the Chivas Brothers' palletisation and automatic dispatch facility in Dumbarton. The project, for one of Scotland's largest bottling plants with storage for over 10,800 palletised loads, is expected to achieve a 50 per cent increase in output.

Phase 1 and 2 involved a major refurbishment of two automatic storage and retrieval systems and associated pallet conveyors, as well as new conveyor systems to improve the flow of palletised product into the warehouse. Excel also totally refurbished eight narrow-aisle stacker cranes.

Phase 3 included eight new production line conveying systems to transport different-sized cartons from the bottling plant into a new palletising plant where they are automatically sorted into pallet profiles. Over 1,000m of Excelveyor 500 belt-driven carton conveyor were installed; and every 600mm section up to the palletising area features a soft-start system that prevents bottles breaking, while achieving the fastest possible cycle speed.



The high-level out-feed conveyor system installed for Phase 4 transfers cases from the automated stores through two barcode labellers and onto conveyor lines that remove in-house pallets and replace them with either a slip sheet or one of five types of shipping pallet. Loads are then transferred on a high-speed shuttle car to one of 13 accumulation lanes, at the end of which is a turntable that automatically orientates the pallets to maximise lorry loads. Excel also supplied two automated guided vehicle systems.

## new product

## FP green lines

FP International has launched two environmentally friendly packaging lines. The products, Flo-Pak Green polystyrene loose fill and Cell-O Green air cushion, form part of the company's Green Family – the umbrella brand under which FP markets its ecological products.

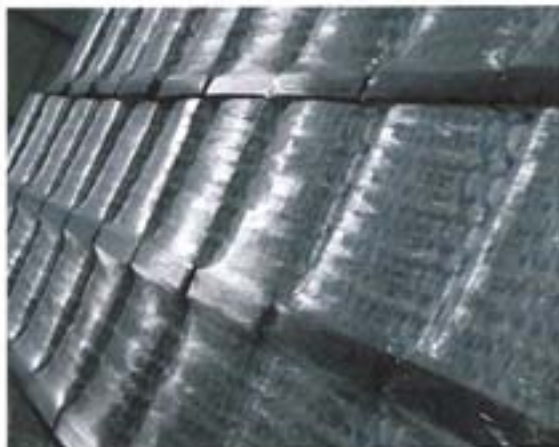
Flo-Pak Green is the first ever degradable expanded polystyrene loose fill on the market. Manufactured from 100 per cent recycled polystyrene, it can be recycled and reused many times, reducing the need for energy-intensive manufacturing processes to produce new loose fill.

The second product introduced as part of FP International's Green Family is Cell-O Green, a cost-effective, durable and environmentally responsible air cushion that offers superior void-fill and cushioning while also being lightweight, recyclable, reusable and degradable. Cell-O Green packaging is made with post-consumer recycled high density polyethylene. It is designed to be reused many times. However, once it has reached the end of its useful life, it can be recycled or incinerated for energy recovery.



Above: Asda's fabric conditioner packaging trial, funded by WRAP, is running at five stores.

Right: bpi.films offers free Wrap Audits which assess every aspect of a wrapping operation with a view to ensuring it employs the latest advances to cut both waste and costs.



Thomas Luther, Sky account director at Unipart Technology Logistics, says: "All companies should promote and encourage a change of mindset around packaging and really understand what value – if any – does packaging bring to the end consumer proposition. Are big colourful boxes needed, or would a modern consumer appreciate and even find a more environmental solution more valuable? This will drive the future around packaging efficiency and should be supported in every business."

And Paul James, general manager for development – environmental and compliance solutions at DHL Supply Chain, points out that companies are more aware than they used to be of the opportunities to save cost and reduce their environmental impact through packaging optimisation. "Apart from legislation – such as the Producer Responsibility (Packaging Waste) Regulations 2007 – major retailers and manufacturers are also pledging to remove packaging waste growth through initiatives including WRAP's Courtauld Commitment.

"The next step is for businesses to be more aware of the benefits to consumers. The recent trend of using microwavable pouches for items such as beans and spaghetti saves money and carbon within the supply chain as well as shelf space at the supermarket. This means that there is no need for consumers to empty the contents into another container for heating, therefore reducing washing of separate containers."

However, John Lancaster, commercial director at bpi.films points out that: "The real problem for all organisations, irrespective of their size, is that they simply don't have the time or resources to continually check their packaging operations are taking advantage of the latest technology."

The company now offers free wrap audits which look at all aspects of a wrapping operation with a view to ensuring it employs the latest advances to cut both waste and costs. "This process often highlights small issues which can make a big difference," says Lancaster. "For instance, it's not unusual for us to find people who have bought wrapping machines five years ago and still have them running on the same settings even though film