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Vidroporto expands via major furnace investment

One of Brazil's leading glass container makers, Vidroporto recently completed a 10 year redevelopment programme with the addition of a third furnace. The company again chose to work with Bucher Emhart Glass for both hot end and cold end equipment, plus advice and support on the project.

Vidroporto is one of the largest glass container manufacturers in Brazil, with sales of R\$170 million (approximately €49 million) in 2014. Based at Porto Ferreira, Sao Paulo, the firm serves customers including AmBev, Cervejaria Petrópolis and Caninha Velho Barreiro.

Edson Rossi, President has led Vidroporto for more than a decade. When he joined, the company was in a tight spot, with revenues of less than R\$25 million (€7 million) and a market share of just 2%. If Vidroporto was to compete with such multi-nationals as O-I and Verallia, it needed to grow – and it did. From 2005 on, under Edson's leadership, the firm embarked on a massive programme of investment and restructuring that delivered an incredible 500% growth in sales over the next eight years. "We had two options... grow or die" he says.

Vidroporto saved its biggest change for last. In 2012, the firm decided to invest R\$240 million (€69 million) in the construction of a third furnace, taking its annual production capacity to 200,000 tons – an increase of 150%. The expansion was completed within two years and production began in October 2014.

COLD END EXPERTISE

Vidroporto's 10 year transformation has seen state-of-the-art glassmaking machinery from suppliers around the world installed at its Porto Ferreira plant,

including both hot end and cold end equipment from Bucher Emhart Glass.

The partnership with Vidroporto has been in place since 1992, when Bucher Emhart Glass shipped its first IS machines to the plant. In 2007, Vidroporto invested in two Veritas iM inspection machines. Pleased with their performance, the firm came back to Bucher Emhart Glass three years later to order six more Veritas machines; one iM, two iB and three iC models.

A FlexInspect T and a FlexInspect BC followed in 2012. Having proved their worth, these two models were chosen to play a central role in the recent furnace installation, with nine of each type being ordered and installed during the third quarter of 2014; one for each of the three inspection legs in the furnace's three shops. This brought the total number of BEG cold end machines at Vidroporto to 28.

All shops are equipped for both NNPB and BB inspection and can handle between 750 and 810 containers/min for standard beer or soft drink containers with a diameter of 60mm, with the capability to deliver short bursts of higher performance handling as many as 900 containers/min.

With a continuous flow of bottles, the risk of losing containers through handling and transport is minimised, while variable speed gives Vidroporto operators the opportunity to reduce both job change time and

maintenance cost. All of the machines are left-handed, giving excellent flexibility in terms of job changes, while reducing the amount of spare and ware parts needed.

RELATIONSHIP BASED ON TRUST

BEG's hot end machines have also featured strongly in Vidroporto's recent transformation. The first arrived in 2010, when the firm added a 10-section double gob SIS machine to its second furnace. An 8-section DG SIS line followed in 2012 for the same furnace. And when the third furnace was constructed in 2014, the glassmaker chose three 12-section triple gob AIS machines. AIS is a reliable, high speed, high volume performer, ideally suited to the longer production runs usually required for beer bottles.

With a total of 33 Bucher Emhart Glass machines across the hot and cold end purchased over the last decade, Vidroporto is clearly comfortable with the relationship. "When we started planning Furnace 3, there was only one manufacturer of forming and inspection machines I wanted to work with" Edson Rossi confirms. "Based on my experiences in recent years, I knew Bucher Emhart Glass was a firm I could trust. There are no second chances when you're making a game-changing investment like this. Above all, we needed a partner who would really listen, really get to grips with what we needed to achieve."



Nine FlexInspect T and nine FlexInspect BC machines were installed during the third quarter of 2014.



The total number of Bucher Emhart Glass cold end machines in use at Vidroporto now stands at 28.

CREATING THE LAYOUT

Bucher Emhart Glass did much more than simply ship machines to Sao Paulo. With decades of experience of working with glass container manufacturers around the world, the firm is well placed to advise its customers on everything from planning new investments to optimising production. "We worked closely with Vidroporto from early concepts through various layout configurations, eventually coming to the conclusion that three 12-section TG AIS machines and FlexInspect machines as best suited for what the company needed to achieve in terms of both speed and flexibility" said Patrick Battersby, Sales Director of Bucher Emhart Glass.

"Bucher Emhart Glass offered valuable input when we were planning our expansion" Edson Rossi explains. "Unlike most inspection machine providers, they're happy to get involved in line layout. Not only did they help us choose the right inspection machines, they made sure we got them in the right configuration too." The cold end layout was developed from Bucher Emhart Glass' recommendations and was realised by MSK Coverttech of Germany, one of Bucher Emhart Glass' partners in the Container Glass Alliance.

LOOKING FORWARD

As a result of its investments, Vidroporto is now able to supply up to 17% of Brazil's national demand and is ideally placed to compete for higher volume orders. These should come both from such existing customers as AmBev (who has dedicated production lines at the new furnace) and new ones too. Vidroporto is targeting revenues of R\$350 million in 2015 and is aiming to consolidate its position as one of Brazil's top three glass container manufacturers alongside O-I and Verallia.

Despite gloomy forecasts for the Brazilian economy in 2015, rising costs for raw materials such as soda ash and higher domestic taxes on beverages, Edson Rossi is optimistic. "In Brazil, glass has gained strength against plastic bottles and aluminium cans recently. Family income has increased and the reusability of glass makes it environmentally attractive too."

As Vidroporto looks forward to a future as a major player in the Brazilian glass industry, no one can accuse Edson Rossi of not practising what he preaches. He does not just work with glass – he lives with it too and clearly believes in it as a versatile, practical and beautiful packaging material. "I don't have a single plastic container or aluminium can in my house" he reveals. "There's nothing but glass!" ■

FURTHER INFORMATION:

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