

“Usage of environmentally sustainable films is the major trend observed in the segment”

...opines **Apurva Kane**, Senior Vice President, Mamata Machinery Pvt Ltd. In a conversation with **Avani Jain**, he talks about the growing demand for plastic packaging and allied machinery segment in the country. He also underlines the recent innovations and challenges faced by the industry.



How is the demand for glass packaging in India and what are the recent trends?

The demand for plastic packaging and allied machinery in India is growing at the rate of 12 per cent per annum. These days, the companies are increasingly focussing on productivity and scale of economy. Further, the market is moving towards versatile yet fast and reliable machines. So, even the companies are prepared to make higher investments, if necessary to achieve these goals.

What are the leading innovations making headway in the plastic packaging segment?

There are various innovations taking place in the segment. Some of the leading innovations include usage of bio-degradable/compostable films as well as recyclable and environmentally sustainable films. These days, there is increased focus on customer convenience and this has led to usage of enclosable spouts and zippers.

The plastic packaging industry is often blamed for polluting the environment. What is your take on this?

Plastics industry is unnecessarily blamed for polluting the environment. If anybody is to be blamed then, it is the poor civic sense of the people in terms of

littering the places and civic authorities which are unable to take appropriate steps for solid waste management in the urban areas. Further, it is seen that nearly 22 per cent of agricultural output is wasted because it is not stored or packed properly. In such a case, plastics serve as the cheapest, most light-weight and durable material that can be used to save this wastage. Thus, in my opinion, putting a ban on usage of plastics as a material for packaging is pointless since till date, there is no alternative material which can take place of plastics. Often paper is seen as the material for replacing plastics and considered as 'Green.' But the fact is that paper is more polluting material than plastics. The mere production of it requires cutting of trees which means destroying the forests. In fact, one should visit the paper mills to see the pollution caused by manufacturing of paper. It should also be noted that unlike paper, plastic is made from man-made cellulose, which means that there is no need to cut trees to produce these. Moreover, plastic packaging is better than paper packaging because if you want to pack 25 kilos of material in a paper bag, you will need a very thick paper bag but in plastic packaging, that thickness can be reduced drastically.

What are the challenges and opportunities faced by the industry?

The biggest challenge faced by the plastic packaging industry is the wrong perception of the people that plastic is polluting. Further, the companies also need to realise their roles and responsibilities well and take the green foot forward without actually being forced by the government or any other regulatory body. Another challenge for the manufacturers in the segment is the higher costs. Thus, the companies in the segment need to lower their packaging costs through innovative materials and processes.

What are your growth plans for the company?

We make machines for industrial bags used for packing salt, detergent, shirt, stationery items, and pouches for packing hand wash, shampoo, etc. These days, we are focussing on developing machines which are versatile and able to process not only laminates but more sustainable non laminated co-extruded films used for making pouches and bags at high speeds. Even the Horizontal Form Fill Seal (HFFS) machine developed by our design team based in USA is able to run un-laminated bare films. ■

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