

Packaging

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Toppan's latest smart packaging solutions at Luxe Pack Monaco P6

Trimurti's focus on developing sustainable packaging solutions P24

The ElitePlus Conference in Mumbai – resuming the conversations P18

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See Page
13

DESIGN AND MARKETING

Toppan's latest smart packaging solutions at Luxe Pack Monaco.....06

Respack 2022 – Design for responsible packaging.....08

The case for the digital printing of newspapers and packvertising.....10

SUSTAINABILITY

UFlex partners with Creduce for carbon neutrality.....12

PREPRESS

Xsys introduces enhanced Woodpecker Nevis surface screening.....14

PureFlexo wins Miraclon India IFCA Star Award 2022.....15

Sibress upgrades FADS3D flexo plate measuring device16

FLEXIBLE PACKAGING

The Elite Conference in Mumbai – resuming the conversations18

Recycling is the only answer to flexible packaging waste – Ashok Chaturvedi18

Aeme Rolltech's first time experience at the Elite Conference20

Pouched milk has revolutionized the Indian milk market22

SP Ultraflex shines again at the Elite Conference.....22

Trimurti orders Hosokawa Alpine 3-layer blown film line in latest investment phase24

Toppan and Max Speciality Films – together at PackEx India 202226

Interview with Constantia's Dr. Achim Grefenstein.....28

Pelican's newest state-of-the-art manufacturing plant32

Rajoo Engineers unveils new 5-layer co-extruded blown film line34

MONOCARTONS

Sivakasi-based Suri Graphix shows paper-based packaging solutions at ProPak India 2022.....36

Sain Packaging to install its first Roland 700 Evolution.....38

Attractive and sustainably packed boxes for Diwali42



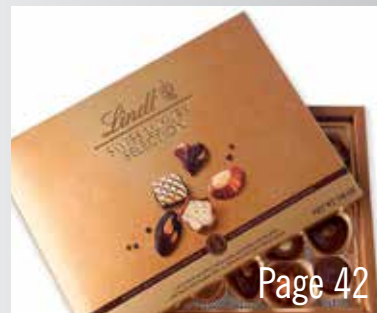
Page 8



Page 14



Page 28



Page 42



Page 60

Carton converting in India – looking for the wow factor!43

WSCS – a global supply chain solution provider in food packaging.....44

CORRUGATION

IndiaCorr Expo & India Folding Carton is all set to meet industry45

BHS India shows its corrugator line virtually at IndiaCorr Expo46

Kongsberg to display automated digital finishing at IndiaCorr expo47

LABELS

Fineflexo's focus on productivity with a new Gallus Labelmaster Press.....48

Avery Dennison inaugurates YEIDA manufacturing facility.....50

Focus on flexible packaging at MPS Systems Asia open house.....55

Xeikon launches hybrid print and converting presses.....56

FILLING & SEALING

KHS uses robots to develop high-performance palletizer58

Syntegon Technology's solid presence at PackEx 22 Mumbai60

Wraptech showcases newly developed products at PackEx 2022.....61

TRACK & TRACE

Holostik introduces 3D labels.....62

AUTOMATION

Ode to excellence in beverage equipment @ Drinktec 202264

Free choice of simulation tool from B&R69

INDUSTRY NEWS

Manroland Sheetfed India.....70

Greiner Packaging buys Alwag.....70

Packaging in the next decade70

To reduce almost 175,000 MT of carbon emission equivalent reduction by 2024

UFlex partners with Creduce for carbon neutrality

The Indian prime minister's pledge to make India Net Zero on carbon emissions by 2070 has inspired the Indian packaging industry to participate wholeheartedly. Two of the country's largest firms in their respective domains of packaging and carbon credit consultancy, UFlex and CREDUCE have signed an agreement to help realize its net zero ambitions – according to a press release dated 22 September 2022.

The scope of the MOU for working together encompasses an analysis of carbon footprint and neutrality and creating and formalizing carbon and plastic credit balances on an internationally accepted and recognized platform. It also envisions setting sustainable development goals and carving out a sustainability roadmap. With this commitment, UFlex stands to become the largest firm in the packaging category, to take effective steps to meet its Environment, Social, and Governance (ESG) goals. These entail co-creating a time-bound strategy toward carbon neutrality, beginning with its flexible packaging division followed by the other divisions of the group.

"We were always committed to steer our group towards sustainable environmental practices, especially to achieve carbon neutrality in Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions. We aspire to cut about 175,000 tonnes of carbon emission equivalent by the end of the 2024 calendar year, across the group. Through our CSR initiatives, we also aspire to implement various community development and outreach programs to achieve the stiff ESG goals that we have set for ourselves," asserts Jeevaraj Pillai, the joint president of the Flexible Packaging Business of UFlex.

"Socio-environmental sustainability has always been one of our core organizational values for quite some time now and we have articulated and imbibed the same in all walks of our functioning," states Manas Kumar Sarkar, general manager of HR and Sustainability at the UFlex Flexible Packaging Business.

UFlex in consultation with Creduce intends to leverage its sustainability initiatives and accrue carbon credits. UFlex has been championing this effort with its global sustainability initiative 'Project Plastic Fix' which includes methodologies such as MLP Recycling (converting industrial and post-consumer plastic waste to granules), manufacturing of PCR grade films Asclepius (by up-cycling discarded PET bottles), and biodegradable laminates that can potentially convert uncollected packaging waste into fertilizer within a fixed period of time.

In its many-sided approach to creating a circular economy, UFlex offers a host of eco-friendly products across its businesses such as inks, water-based adhesives, PCR films, MLP recycling machines, gravure cylinders for water-based inks, and alu-alu blister packs.

"It is a huge honor and excitement to see such industry giants taking big leaps towards sustainability and carbon neutrality. At Creduce, we see huge potential among organizations like UFlex to accrue carbon credits. We would be able to strategize a path towards a complete zero carbon footprint. These accruals of carbon credits would be clubbed with community development initiatives like smokeless cookstoves and clean drinking potable water. Firms like UFlex can lead the way for other players to follow," says Shailendra Singh Rao, director of Creduce.

Several studies have addressed the environmental impact of plastic, but more focus needs to be placed on plastic waste management sustainable production processes, reducing dependency on fossil fuels, and such steps that will lead to positive environmental impacts such as decreasing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Organizations across the world are steadily moving toward carbon neutrality and Net Zero Carbon Emissions. The latest MoU between the two organizations reaffirms corporate India's commitment to helping the country show leadership on the environmental front. ■



M Sarkar GM HR and Sustainability and Jeevaraj Pillai joint president Flexible Packaging of UFlex at the signing of the MOU with Creduce director Shailendra Singh Rao on right. Photo UFlex

We would be able to strategize a path towards a complete zero carbon footprint. These accruals of carbon credits would be clubbed with community development initiatives like smokeless cookstoves and clean drinking potable water. Firms like UFlex can lead the way for other players to follow." – Shailendra Singh Rao

Resilience, growth, people, profit and planet

The Elite Conference in Mumbai – resuming the conversations

Naresh Khanna

The 9th Elite Conference in Mumbai on the 5th and 6th of September 2022 was another significant step in the evolutionary progress of our society and industry. For those among the 1,400 film producers, converters, recyclers, suppliers, and experts that were privileged to attend, it will be a challenge to get more from any two days of their working life. The confluence of the leading Indian manufacturers, converters, and the leading technology, consumable, and solutions suppliers globally has taken the issues of industry sustainability in terms of profit and viability and the environmental sustainability of flexible packaging further along the road from the general to the specific.

That there is no consensus on every issue is a testament to our political and industrial democracy. However, this do-as-you-please (ultra-democratic) environment presents a greater burden on the industry leaders to push its solutions and influence the government in the right direction. Every speaker and most of the participants in the discussions were responsible business leaders and did not agree on everything.



India needs thousands of plastic waste collection centers

Recycling is the only answer to flexible packaging waste – Ashok Chaturvedi

The only solution to tackling multilayer flexible packaging waste is to recycle it, Ashok Chaturvedi, chairman of packaging major Uflex, told the 9th edition of Speciality Films & Flexible Packaging Global Summit 2022 in Mumbai in his keynote on the morning of 5 September. The summit was held on 5-6 September.

“The answer to the problem of multilayer flexible packaging is recycling. Whether you use the mechanical or the chemical process, recycling is the answer. If the audience thinks that monomer is the answer to the problem of flexible packaging waste, it is not. A few years down the line, we will realize that using monomers has not reduced waste. Even with monomers, the flexible packaging waste will continue to increase unless we do not recycle it,” Chaturvedi said.

Chaturvedi stressed that collecting flexible packaging waste is a mammoth task but if the waste can be collected, it can be easily recycled as well. The biggest challenge is to get the waste collected and supplied to recyclers.

“If the flexible packaging waste can be collected then recyclers can make a variety of products out of that waste. And there is a big demand for those products,” he said. Chaturvedi requested the industry stakeholders to help provide raw material, which is the flexible packaging waste, to the recyclers.

Uflex has set up recycling centers at its manufacturing plants in India. All the waste generated at the plant and also the waste generated in the vicinity of the plants is collected and recycled at these centers. A variety of plastic products are made out of this waste.



Keynote speakers of the 9th Elite Conference in Mumbai – L-R: Sudhir Satpathy of Godrej Consumer Products, RS Sodhi of Amul, Ashok Chaturvedi of Uflex, and Peter Steinbeck of Windmoller & Holscher. Photo PSA

Sanjay Gupta of the DS Group (both a brand owner and a converter) said the enactment of the single-use plastic ordinance on 1 July 2022 was hasty and not well thought out. The implication is that it might be self-defeating. This was coming from a company that is keen to be green and already uses rPET in some of its containers.

“Our request to the authorities is that they should set up collection centers. These centers can be set up in partnership with the private sector as well. India needs thousands of such centers so that flexible packaging waste can be collected and recycled. The recycling part is not a problem, the collection is the issue,” he said.

■ Uflex’s overseas plants to have recycling centers

After setting up recycling centers at its plants in India, Uflex is now doing the same at its overseas plants. “You will be glad to know that this October or November, the Poland plant is starting its multilayer flexible packaging waste recycling center. We are starting a center at our Mexico plant. Each center will cost about US\$ 25 million. This investment will not go waste and will generate proper EBIDTA for the company.

“Our model is a perfect model and profitable. This model will be profitable in India given that the entrepreneur or the recycler gets the waste. I welcome entrepreneurs to come and visit our recycling plant at the Noida plant,” Chaturvedi said. ■

– Shardul Sharma



Ashok Chaturvedi, chairman of packaging major Uflex at the company stand at the 9th Elite Conference in Mumbai on 5 October 2022

It displayed lightweight sleeves at the conference

Acme Rolltech's first time experience at the Elite Conference

Acme Rolltech, known for manufacturing ceramic rolls and sleeves, took part as a sponsor with its stand for the first time at the recent Elite Conference in Mumbai. It found the entire event and the presentations from the major brand owners and suppliers to be insightful for its activities. The team was also pleased with the interaction with the industry stakeholders during the event.

While some of the leading Indian flexible packaging converters made presentations on the growth and sustainability in the flexible packaging industry, Acme Rolltech brought their lightweight sleeves, which can be used in CI Flexo printing machines, to show at the event. With many of the leading converters at the event, it discussed its anilox rolls and sleeves and their use in various types of coating applications.



Acme Rolltech team posing at their Stand in the Elite Conference. Photo: Acme Rolltech



The lightweight sleeve used in CI Flexo printing machines. Photo: Acme Rolltech

Sandeep Sharma, director of Acme Rolltech, said, "Elite Plus is considered the biggest event in India for the flexible packaging industry, so it is always beneficial to be a part of this important event. Yes, it was our first time at the event. And we not only participated in the event but we were pleased to be one of the stand partners and exhibitors." ■
– Pallavi Choudhary

Nevertheless, for many of the other speakers, the ban on single-use plastics is a milestone in the progress of the Plastic Waste Management rules in the country – a signal that the Indian government is aware of its responsibility to its citizens, the environment, and its global commitments on climate change. The supporters of the ban on single-use plastics acknowledge that it is not a perfect solution, but they are encouraged and hopeful that government is ready to make unpalatable regulations and that it will understand the complexity of the solutions sooner or later.

There is an overwhelming feeling in the industry that only government regulation can push both industry and society into the appropriate behaviors needed for there to be any future at all. Yet, the conference session after session presented positive actions and solutions by the brand owners, flexible film and packaging manufacturers, and suppliers to reduce energy and waste and enable the collection, sorting, and recycling of plastic materials.

Collection and sorting must precede recycling

On the first morning of the 9th Elite Conference, there were five keynotes, and each was interesting; we will circle back to these in subsequent articles. But in this first overview article, one must discuss the elephant in the room, especially the word 'sustainability' which was likened to the elephant, suggesting that its meaning or the required actions are as varied to its numerous proponents as the descriptions of the blind men in the fable. The multiplicity of the keynotes and

The Elite conference session after session presented positive actions and solutions by the brand owners, flexible film and packaging manufacturers, and suppliers to reduce energy and waste and enable the collection, sorting, and recycling of plastic materials.

discussions refined the meaning of sustainability because it presented the perspectives of brand owners, converters, and suppliers.

However, another elephant in the room or the deliberations is the argument of monopolymer versus mixed polymer laminates – as less or more recyclable. Ashok Chaturvedi, the chairman of Uflex, is a frank and assertive proponent of the recyclability of mixed polymer laminates. In his keynote, he was clear that the answer to environmental problems is not monomers but the collection, sorting, and recycling of waste plastic.

His company Uflex has been an acknowledged user of pyrolysis for a long time, although in his talk, he admitted that for several reasons, including the unavailability of plastic waste feedstock, the project has been a failure and economically unviable. Moreover, what he brought to the table was his continuous investigation of waste collection, sorting, and recycling. With a close look at a waste collection and sorting plant in Poland, he described the universal problem of the unavailability of plastic feedstock. He has backed his views with an investment in a waste sorting plant in Poland to be commissioned in October-November and another in Mexico to be established by the end of 2022. He said, "The plant in Mexico will have a positive EBITDA." These are both countries in which Uflex produces packaging films.

Chaturvedi's argument seems to be that the talk of monomer materials is not the answer but that the priority is the collection, sorting, and recycling – whether mechanical or chemical of plastic waste, including mixed laminates. This important discussion arose repeatedly in a conference that, to some extent, championed monopolymer materials and especially PE, BOPE, or MOPE films as the most easily recyclable solutions for sustainable flexible packaging.

■ Sustainability and collaboration

We will attempt to cover many important discussions of strategy and technology at the 9th Elite Conference in subsequent articles. In this first article, I will merely mention two other points that we will come back to later – the viability and lack of margins among Indian flexible packaging converters, highlighted by both Mohamed Nadeem of Paharpur3P and Sanjay Gupta of the DS Group, and also discussed by RS Sodhi of Amul. They questioned what is the priority of sustainability. Sodhi asked, "What is sustainability for a nation? Is it not full stomachs and full employment? Sustainability starts when stomachs are full!"

This is by no means a comprehensive discussion of the conference, but we will attempt to reiterate some of the discussions and solutions, including the technical insights. One had to be there to experience the evolution of ideas and actions that have taken place over the last few conferences in the past six or seven years. There is an existential change, motion, and development in the Indian flexible packaging industry, perhaps one of the fastest growing in the world. And as several speakers and participants said, "It has to happen, it's up to us, and we will have to collaborate because the solutions are complex and require it." ■

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■ Share of pouched milk will be almost half by 2025 in the overall Indian milk market - Amul

Pouched milk has revolutionized the Indian milk market

The share of plastic pouched milk in the overall Indian milk market will increase to 47% by 2025 from 30% today as this is the most cost-effective way to distribute and supply the commodity, Dr R S Sodhi of Amul told the 9th edition of Speciality Films & Flexible Packaging Global Summit 2022 that was held in Mumbai on 5 and 6 September. He was a keynote speaker on the first day.

“India is the only country where milk is sold in plastic pouches. About 90% of milk supplied by Amul is sold in plastic pouches. It has revolutionized the way milk has been supplied to consumers. If we hadn’t been using plastic pouches to pack and distribute milk, the packaging cost would have been very high. If we would have been packing 6 crore (60 million) liters of milk in glass bottles the industry’s expenses would have been Rs 37,000 crore. Packing 6 crore liters of milk in plastic pouches costs only Rs 1,600 crore. So, you can imagine the cost saving that takes place for the dairy industry,” Sodhi said.

“The volumes of milk that we are selling in plastic pouches cannot be done with any other forms of packaging. Amul is selling 1.5-1.6 crore liters of milk every day,” he added.

As of today, the total value of the milk market is Rs 8.5 lakh crores (about US\$ 110 billion) while the organized dairy market is about Rs 3 lakh crores (US\$ 2.5 billion). The pouched milk market is about Rs 1.5 lakh crore. “The way we are growing the organized dairy market will grow from Rs 3 lakh crore to Rs 10 lakh crore in the next 10 years,” Sodhi said on the stupendous success of Amul.

Amul today is the undisputed leader in the dairy industry. According to Sodhi, there are many reasons for the company’s success but the most important one is consistency. “For the last 75 years whatever we have done, we have been consistent at it. Whether it is our business objective or providing stable and remunerative prices to millions of dairy farmers. Also, providing our products at very affordable prices to consumers. So both producers and consumers are happy. Other reasons for our success are professionalism and technological and marketing innovations,” he said. ■

– Shardul Sharma



8th Speciality Films & Flexible Packaging Global Summit 2019



■ The relentless efficiency improvements of slitting and rewinding by automation

SP Ultraflex shines again at the Elite Conference

The SP Ultraflex team was quite upbeat about the recent 9th Speciality Films Conference organized by Elite Plus on 5th and 6th September 2022 at the Hotel Sahara Star in Mumbai. “We loved every minute of our first off-line event after three years. The energy levels were to be seen to be believed, as delegates from some of the most reputed companies in the Indian flexible packaging industry exchanged news and views about where the industry is headed, especially regarding the waste collection, sorting, and sustainability issues. A global panel of speakers from 18 countries shared their domain expertise to an engaged audience that surpassed all previous editions of this annual event in terms of sheer numbers,” the SP Ultraflex team said.

SP Ultraflex managing director Biku Kohli spoke again this year about the evolution of the company’s slitter rewinders. This year’s update was very impressive partly because one wondered what more can he say about this topic.



Biku Kohli, managing director, SP Ultraflex, delivering his presentation at the Elite Conference Photo SP Ultraflex

However, Kohli’s ‘Slitter Rewinders that do MORE with LESS’ impressed me as he came up with a host of options each going further and automating yet another step of the finishing press right up to the precise weight of the output rolls. It was a presentation looking at saving every second. ■

– NK



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