

Metal meeting

The sixth Metpack in Messe Essen saw more than 7,000 visitors from 105 countries, while exhibitor numbers were up, Katrine Kjoeller says

The Metpack show once again proved the place to be in metal packaging with a large number of visitors from across the world and no less than 223 exhibitors from 25 countries – China, the US, the UK, Italy and Switzerland being the main exhibiting nations.

Exhibitors announced transactions worth more than €100 million resulting from the show and a representative survey performed by Messe Essen indicated that one in four visitors signed a purchase contract at Metpack. It also showed that more than 90 per cent of the trade visitors used Metpack 2008 to obtain information about innovations and refinements, to maintain business relations in a targeted way and to conclude transactions.

Lars Herbert and Wolfgang Niemsch, the two chairmen of the Metpack Committee, see the trade fair as a mirror image of the mood in the sector: "Metal packaging is in demand all over the world. The companies are registering double-figure increases in turnover. This year as well, the important decision-takers were here."

Niemsch adds: "This year, compared to 2005, I was very optimistic, despite some criticism. Though material prices went up, the world market had an impact and metal has been second in growth only after paper. The can has been revitalised again and again. While everyone, across various packaging industries, are trying to save material, metal has been reduced in cans by 20 per cent and there are prospects for more reductions. New processes are being developed and I don't believe the can is close to being extinct."

International

Two thirds of the trade visitors came from abroad. One in three visitors originated from non-European countries. Guests from South, East and Central Asia were represented to a particularly great extent and 85 per cent of the visitors are decisively involved in procurement decisions of their companies.

The gallery between the two halls was mainly dedicated to Chinese and other Asian stands. Li Xiaoli, chief officer of the China Packaging Federation Metal Containers Association (Department Metal Packaging Editorial) says: "Ninety per cent of the exhibitors who participated in our cooperative booth were involved for the first time but, even now, it is already certain that we will need a larger booth at the next Metpack. Our discussions have resulted in many business transactions and new contacts. A lot of visitors came to us from Africa, South America and Egypt. For Chinese manufacturers, the fair was a good opportunity to introduce themselves and their products to an international public."

Welding developments

There were numerous new developments at the show, many of them highlighted in the nominations for the innovation award. One of the more prominent was CanMan's X6 Silentium, an emission protection and sound deadening solution available



as an option for the X6 can welding line, which drops the noise down to 30db. It consists of a mantle, aligned with the whole X-line. It is mechanically liftable to access the units of the line – hence it is possible to do finetuning or overhaul on each machine. The mantle is lowered during production to sustain the intended aural emission protection of the environment, and the procedure only takes about 30 seconds.

As windows have been omitted to achieve the needed noise reduction, four cameras are placed under the welder dome instead to give the operator insight to critical areas of the production flow.

Another new product related to welding came from Cazander and represents the company's first foray into new equipment. Arnold Cazander says: "In development with Canman, we have a hot melt spray coating that is introduced via the welder arm. As it is sprayed on, the weld cools and the coating sets. It has to cool down quickly. Right now the time to cure is too long, so we need to go down to ten seconds. The process will save energy, space and the maintenance of drying ovens, as well as employing less hardware than traditional coating lines."

Along with providing machines for canbodies and bottom domes, Italian-based Cevolani also displayed various welding components. Vincent Argodizzo, customer service and sales manager, says: "We have been working with the University of

Bologna on a welding monitor, measuring the energy and conductivity of the weld. We have also developed a tower robot that collects blanks and uses a four-part picking arm, which sends the blanks to the welder. It is mainly controlled by brushless motors and the picking unit is controlled by vacuum pads."

He adds: "Our marketing tool is a 3D film that gives our customers a chance to see our products in action in three dimensions. The video is of a slitter, mobile welder, oven, lacquering unit and conveyors."

The winner is...

Swiss can machinery maker Soudronic was awarded the coveted Metpack Innovation Award in a ceremony on the 23 April of the Metpack show in Messe Essen, for its new inline measuring device used to analyse the body blank material characteristics and automatically set the roll form geometry.

Gerhard Müller, the chairman of the Metpack Innovation Award Jury and Egon Galinnis, managing