AIMING FOR PERFECTION

Partnership creates unique state-of-the-art form/fill/seal packaging equipment for the North American market.
In today’s highly specialized meat and poultry industry, it is virtually impossible for one company to be “all things to all customers.” However, much can be achieved when two leading companies join forces to offer best-of-class machinery and service. Such is the case regarding the successful and strengthening partnership between Canton, Mass.-based Reiser and Emmen, Holland-based Repak (pronounced RAY-pack) when it comes to selling unique Reiser-inspired Repak packaging machines to the North American market. Reiser has been selling and servicing high-quality food processing and packaging equipment throughout the world for almost 50 years to many industries including meat, seafood, produce, food, bakery and cheese. Repak, founded in 1985 by director and equipment designer René Schole, develops high-tech packaging systems. A specialist in form/fill/seal machinery, Repak is also a recognized innovator in new forming technology.

Joining forces
In 2001, Reiser was the exclusive Dixie Union agent in North America and the United Kingdom when Dixie Union sold its equipment business with three years left on the contract. Reiser knew this contract would not be renewed, nevertheless, they were determined to remain in the horizontal form/fill/seal packaging machinery business.

“We considered all of our options,” says Peter Mellon, president of Reiser, during an exclusive interview and tour of Repak’s manufacturing complex in Emmen. “This included building packaging machinery at Ross where we own the factory building. However, we came to a conclusion that we would not be able to do a good job building horizontal form/fill/seal machines in a tray-sealer factory. We wanted to stay in our core competence area.”

After much consideration, Reiser executives decided to form a partnership with a packaging machinery manufacturer that did not have a selling organization in Reiser’s distribution area.

Roger Reiser and I visited just about every horizontal form/fill/seal manufacturer that did not have a selling organization in North America, and Repak was by far the best choice for us because of their machinery, technology, and people,” Mellon says. “At that time, Repak was only building large packaging machines that were individual engineered solutions.”

During initial meetings, Reiser explained to Repak what it needed for the North American market in packaging machinery. By melding experiences and abilities, the two companies joined forces to accomplish this task.

Mellon explains the strategy. “We combined Reiser’s 15 years of experience of selling Dixie Union and the key features from the Dixie Union packaging machine, and Repak took all of the good features from their experience in building engineered solutions. Between us, we wrote a specification for a packaging machine that had sanitation as the number-one priority and other features we believed were important to our customers. We had the luxury of starting
from a clean slate and building a very competitive packaging machine that would include our five-star service team.”

An impressive line

Repak offers:

**Entry-level leader** – The compact construction of the RE 15 makes starting out in form/fill/seal technology easy. Featuring superior hygiene and a standard operating unit, the RE 15 makes it possible to create form/fill/seal packages for use with rigid films and enables top-web labeling applications.

**Flexibility leader** – The RE 20 offers maximum flexibility for meeting all production requirements, whether there’s a need for creating different shaped packages or rigid film applications. The high-quality, stainless-steel construction and superior packaging performance gives this machine an outstanding price/performance ratio.

**Modular solution** – The RE 25 offers modular construction for a growing plant environment. It can be lengthened, components can be added, and web widths can be subsequently changed if required. It stands out due to its high packaging performance even when creating shaped, rigid, or sophisticated packages.

**High-end machine** – The RE 30 offers the highest output levels and can produce the most demanding packaging types, which include top-web forming. Large cut-off lengths and film widths are no problem. Like all Repak models, it is robustly constructed and suitable for multiple-shift operations. Changeover to different packaged shapes is quick and effortless.

Repak’s next generation of form/fill/seal technology features:

- More hygiene with angled, easy-to-clean, heavy-duty stainless steel construction.
- More flexibility and a longer working life. Heavy-duty stainless steel

MORE ON REPRAK

Repak is based in Emmen, Holland, a thriving industrial town of 200,000 people in Southeast Drenthe. Starting operations in 1985, the company complex consisting of two buildings housing corporate headquarters and a manufacturing facility were significantly modernized in 1998 to address increasing business demands. More than 100 people currently work at the complex.

“The heart of our company is our engineering department,” says Coos van Dorsten, Repak sales director. “We have a team of people working here who develop our machines. All machines are invented and designed using a special three-dimensional software program, which allows us to simulate production before actually going into production of the machines.

“Each engineer has his own specialty,” he adds. “For example, as the die goes into the assembly hall and if something is wrong, a specialist will help fix the problem. The specialists assemble each machine.”

**FOCUS ON HYGIENE**

Hygiene is the No. 1 priority in the design and build of all Repak machinery. Machines are designed with no corners or edges preventing contamination from setting in. All interiors of the machines are easily accessible to enable effective and simple cleaning and sanitation. Sanitary stainless-steel construction allows the longest possible operational life. The packaging material and package shape can be suited to customer needs, and a fully pivoting display touch-control screen ensures the operator always has the program in full view during operation.

“All die sets are made at the facility,” van Dorsten says. Repak’s milling department utilizes advanced automation, which includes robotics. High-quality aluminum blocks for making die forms are supplied to Repak. The company mills its own parts. Once finished, die sets receive a special surface treatment to prevent corrosion.

“You need to work with companies that have a special expertise in this treatment process,” van Dorsten adds. “We use several companies for treatment. We ship our die sets out and get them back in one or two days.”

Once parts are made, treated and stored, machine assembly begins by trained experts.

“The machine assembly plant opened the second week in February 2005,” van Dorsten says. “Our parts inventory is computerized to prevent slow down of machinery construction. These are all parts that can be used in our new machine generation, and they’re not custom made. We use only standardized components, which means they’re available throughout the world.”

Supplying machinery parts is a significant part of Repak’s business, but it satisfies their customers even more if they change a part every three years instead of every year.

As Repak’s product line evolves, the company is always looking for the best material available to construct its unique machinery.

Each Repak machine is designed to repel and prevent contamination. No materials can get into or remain on the machines.
“The main sanitation issue with many thermo formers is the main frames,” van Dorsten says. “Our biggest competitor does not have equivalent hygienic standards. We have patented our main-frame technology. All frames are sealed and designed with angles to ensure water runs off whereas competitive frames are squared and threaded, which does not allow for effective cleaning.”

Repak’s facility restrooms are designed with sanitation in mind. “This is how the normal bathroom looks in a meat factory, not in a machine factory,” van Dorsten says during a tour. “It has a pitched floor with a drain, washable lockers, and tiled walls. It is clean, and it stays clean. This is in line with our corporate philosophy.”

Ergonomic devices and systems are employed where necessary to prevent employee injury. For example, ready modules are placed into Repak’s machines with the help of ergonomic lifting devices.

On the day of the media tour, the final assembly line contained five newly built machines ready for shipment to the United States.

MORE THAN SANITARY
Additional significant features include:
- Heavy-duty stainless steel construction
- Two four-point lifting systems for superior forming and sealing
- Faster cycle times
- Ability to run thinner films due to “rapid air forming” technology

However, the biggest point of difference remains Repak’s superior sanitary design.

“This is a completely stainless steel machine that can be completely washed down,” says Peter Mellon, president of Reiser. “Many small competitive machines contain a lot of aluminum and aren’t washdown friendly.

DEPENDABLE MACHINERY
Repak’s machinery design, which focuses on sanitation, durability, and dependability, is paying off. “Each machine has to work for 10 years without any problems,” van Dorsten says. “We have to maintain our reputation for high-quality. It’s a long-term commitment of ours.”

Each machine also comes with a small toolbox. “You don’t need a lot of tools, just a few,” van Dorsten says.

Meanwhile, Reiser continues building its world-class network of service and sales professionals to support the Repak line.

“The first machine can be sold by the salesman, but the second machine is sold by the organization,” Mellon says. “Reiser is very keen on taking care of its customers.”

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**The perfect partnership**

Repak has technological features built into its packaging machines that create many points of differences from competitive machinery, Mellon says, such as its sanitary design and the unique Repak lifting system, just to mention a few.

“And the value that Reiser adds is the Reiser service. We believe we have the best service in the business,” Mellon states.

Spare parts for Repak machines are always in stock at Reiser’s Canton, Mass., complex. Prior to the release, Reiser assembled a team of field service engineers who were trained at Repak headquarters in Emmen on this line of packaging machinery in preparation of the North American launch.

This training was invaluable to the business relationship and is ongoing. According to Mellon, service personnel are based at Reiser’s office in Canton as well as strategically in the field throughout the United States.

Repak’s packaging machinery pricing falls between the middle and top tiers. “Typically, we’re competing against a small aluminum-type machine. We are more expensive, but our service team brings value to command a higher price along with the technology, which is radically different from our competitors,” Mellon says.

**Points of difference include:**
- **Sanitation in standard design**
- **The unique Repak lifting system**
- **Materials savings**
- **Module flexibility**
- **Rugged stainless steel construction for durability**

**The future of packaging**

Mellon predicts recloseable packaging will continue to grow in popularity in North America, and that environmentally friendly materials will also become more in demand. There must be adaptations made to the machines in order to run some of the new materials being developed that are more environmentally friendly, Mellon says.

Packaging film savings is another feature that is growing in importance. “Our packaging business is growing because households are smaller so more packages are needed,” says Coos van Dorsten, Repak sales director.

“Butchers are disappearing so more packages are needed in America and the United Kingdom. There is a big plus in our machines because they can do the forming so well. The border between pre-formed trays and thermoforming will become smaller over time.”

Product diversity allows Reiser to maximize its sales potential. “We sell tray sealing machines and thermoforming machines,” Mellon says. “Some applications lend themselves best to a thermo former, and some lend themselves best to a tray sealer. We are in the fortunate position where we sell the market’s leading tray sealer, and we have the thermoforming technology of Repak available to us. This places us in a very strong position in the marketplace.”

“Operator-friendly controls will also continue growing in importance, along with evolving data analysis capabilities, which will allow operators to quickly determine how well a machine is running — and to make fast adjustments if necessary,” van Dorsten adds.

The Repak partnership is also making a positive mark in the Canadian market. “Repak has always been very flexible,” says Claudio Varrasso, Vice President of Sales, Reiser Canada Ltd., Burlington, Ontario, Canada. “One of the advantages of the Repak partnership today is our ability to react quickly. We find them a very willing supplier with whom we can partner.”