

Further strengthening



SINCE THE MIDDLE OF 2006, **MARTINA STOCKER** HAS BEEN SALES MANAGER AT FRITSCH GMBH IN MARKT EINERSHEIM, GERMANY. UNDER HER MANAGEMENT, THE SALES ORGANIZATION WILL ASSUME A NEW AND FUTURE-ORIENTED LOOK. THIS ALSO INCLUDES THE NEW ORIENTATION OF DIFFERENT SUBSIDIARIES. BAKING+BISCUIT INTERNATIONAL'S EDITOR-IN-CHIEF HILDEGARD M. KEIL TALKED TO MS STOCKER.

+ bbi: Ms. Stocker, you have now been sales manager at Fritsch in Markt Einerheim for nine months. With iba, you have experienced the most important industrial event. When viewing this show, the industry, the market structures and mechanisms, while being relatively new in this industry, what were your impressions? Compared to other industries you are familiar with, what is positive, what is negative?

+ Stocker: iba is definitely a leading show with increasing international significance.

+ bbi: German manufacturers of bakery machines, in general, are considered to be innovative and leading in terms of quality. Predominantly they also lead in terms of price. This might be an advantage in Europe with its distinct bakery traditions where investments into bakery equipment are made within short time horizons, but not necessarily everywhere else. Will the domestic machine manufacturers, among them Fritsch, have to expect to play other rules of the game internationally?

+ Stocker: In my opinion, the German manufacturers master the international rules of the game quite well; otherwise they would not have such a large export share and success in the international market. Of course, the customers' investment criteria in other countries are often different from the situation in Europe. We as manufacturers of bakery equipment have to keep abreast with it in order to be successful. On the other hand it does not make sense to compete in areas where we will not be competitive due to our labor costs while neglecting our own strengths such as innovation and quality at the same time. We will further increase our strengths. The international markets are very diverse and constantly moving due to company consolidations and changing consumer habits.

+ bbi: In your estimation, where are the growth markets for the manufacturers of bakery equipment overall, where is the market for machines for the production of fine bakery wares

as amongst others offered by Fritsch, and where for dough band plants, the area of bread and roll production that Fritsch has also entered?

+ Stocker: Currently we see growth markets mainly in the US and Russia including Eastern Europe, followed by China and East-Asia. We have not discovered a difference between the general bakery machines production and Fritsch.

+ bbi: Dough band plants used in the production of bread and rolls have the advantage of gentle dough handling. The drawback, in general, is the lack of weight preciseness. At iba, some traditional manufacturers of bread and roll plants took this line and introduced new dough division technology. Will these classics push the dough band plants aside?

+ Stocker: This is up to the customer to decide. Fact is that the weight preciseness for soft dough in dough band plants has constantly improved. This is no longer a problem for firmer doughs. The advantages that dough band plants have in terms of maintenance and availability are still present.

+ bbi: Fritsch has opened its own office in Russia. How important are Russia and the states of the former USSR for sales in your company? Will you have your own service team and spare part inventory as well as a master baker for Russia?

+ Stocker: The market in Russia is of high significance to Fritsch. This is the reason for the introduction of our own office and our own fair stand since 2006. This representation will be continuously expanded according to schedule and under consideration of further market developments. This also includes our own service team and spare part inventory as well as a master baker for Russia, of course.

+ bbi: Asia is an interesting market for the manufacturers of bakery machines. Fritsch's product range is met with great interest in many countries. Last year, Fritsch was one exhibitor at Bakery China. Is China a large sales market for Fritsch



and how do you plan to protect yourself against product piracy?

+ Stocker: We are slowly approaching the Chinese market, but in the medium term, we consider it to have much potential. Product piracy is much easier in the craft sector than in the industrial sector where predominantly

the knowledge of the machine designers is decisive. For us the only strategy against product piracy in countries such as China and India will be innovation and know-how.

+ bbi: In the past five to ten years, streamlining was one of the top topics in European companies. Currently the focus seems to have ►

++ Fritsch is one of the most important suppliers of laminating technology in the international baking industry. In addition to croissant and fine bakery wares lines, Fritsch is now also offering rolls plants.

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shifted. Investment projects are increasingly considered in terms of quality improvements and in the case of doubt they compete with investments in human resources. Is Fritsch better prepared for this situation than its competitors and if yes, why?

+ Stocker: These shifts are mostly of local origin and the result of national economical developments. Globally seen, quality and productivity have always been important decision parameters for a purchase and Fritsch's products are ideally suitable; easy to operate, low manpower requirements, high availability and the possibility of the highest product quality – Fritsch is known for all that.

+ bbi: Sheeting and laminating plants, lines for fine bakery wares and croissants on one side, dough band plants on the other side – is this product range sufficient to be successful on an international level or is a broader range needed today to be taken seriously in the increasingly stronger turn-key business?

+ Stocker: In particular, because we focus on our key business, we have increasing success in the turn-key business as well. Tailor-made combinations of equipment are possible, thus resulting in genuine benefits for the customer. Our successes in business confirm this strategy loud and clear.

+ bbi: Do I see it right that you are about to reorganize the sales structures at Fritsch to get them closer to the parent company? What are these changes targeted at and what will be the advantages for your customers?

+ Stocker: These changes at Fritsch are not a concentration in the parent company. This would not benefit our customers. The changes are being done for the optimization of sales and handling processes and the adaptation to changing market requirements. The target is a higher quality for our customers and in the clarification of orders and communications with Fritsch. Eventually our customers will receive their plants more quickly and the set-up and operation will be faster.

+ bbi: For iba, Fritsch reviewed its machine range for the smaller craft bakers. Where is this group of customers located in today's sales structure or to put it another way round how much intensive care can industrial customers expect from Fritsch?

+ Stocker: For Fritsch, the entire spectrum of companies, from the artisan baker to the largest industrial plant is important in the future as well. Therefore we will continue to provide all support functions. However, the customers' requirements differ on the various markets. This will be taken into consideration in our product range.

+ bbi: Ms. Stocker, you have previously worked for international companies. What tempted you to change to a family-owned company in Markt Einersheim?

+ Stocker: When I changed to Fritsch, the industry, as well as the creative possibilities that a medium-sized company offers were appealing to me.

+ bbi: Ms. Stocker, thank you for this interview. +++