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Energy – a never-ending story?

How much energy do you waste on a daily basis? For bakeries, the answer to this question might, in future, become a critical issue which may be decisive when considering the survival of a company. Currently, rising prices for grains and other raw materials are more alarming for companies than energy prices. However, the growing market success of frozen baked goods is pushing the energy consumption question more and more to the foreground of attention. Even within premium markets such as French fine baked goods (Viennese products), the purchase curves of fresh and frozen products are running diametrically apart. This has many diverse consequences.

The result will be that energy bills will rise. A company that is ready to react will gain cost leadership and with that more scope for its own profits. Many parameters can be considered for this reaction. Amongst them are energy savings through intelligent utilization of energy and the possible complete recycling of energy that is used but not yet utilized. Using waste heat for heating water as a single method is not enough. However, there are no reasonable ideas at this point from equipment suppliers and science engineers on how to transform residual heat into cool temperatures or for other methods that actually make sense. The cheapest form of energy is the one that is not used at all. Here again, the technologists as well as the machine designers amongst the suppliers are being asked for their ideas. Only about one tenth of the energy required for the baking process is really needed "inside" the product; the remainder of the energy is used for heating, removal of water, etc. The most salient requirement for energy saving measures is, that this subject is considered seriously by companies and that they compile and evaluate the energy consumption in their plants. In this context, it can be said that an old business analogy is still true: demand triggers supply! If companies are not interested in the energy consumption of their plants, then there will be no engineering company willing to invest in the development of energy-saving equipment.

However, if bakeries do not address this issue, it will come to light some day as the public will be increasingly interested in knowing which companies consume the highest amount of energy. Amongst all food production processes, baking is one of the most energy consuming processes and the currently popular combination of baking-freezing-baking utilizes even more. As a result, par-baked frozen products might get the unwanted image of being harmful to the climate. This would have a knock-on effect for the entire baking industry. Does the baking industry have an answer to this risk? At the moment, probably not!

Incidentally, about ten years ago, there was an investigation into the climatic influence on different types of bakeries. At that time, it was found that large industrial bakeries consumed more energy for the production of 1 kg product than craft bakeries or households. Ten years ago, CO₂ footprints were not required by the retail or the public. Today, they are!

Therefore, it is high time to consider these issues and look for solutions. There will not be one single magical answer, but several different solutions. To identify these will only be possible if science, mechanical engineering and raw materials developers amalgamate their efforts, headed by the baking companies as initiators. It is about your money, your market and your future. These should be reasons enough to take action.



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