

Russia belongs to Europe

THE AIBI CONGRESS ELECTED GUIDO VANHERPE AS PRESIDENT. BAKING+ BISCUIT INTERNATIONAL TALKED TO HIM ABOUT THE FUTURE OF THE EUROPEAN BAKERY MARKET

+ bbi: Mr. Vanherpe, at the AIBI Congress in Bruges you were elected President of the Association Internationale de la Boulangerie Industrielle for the next 2 years. What will be the main topics on your agenda?

+ Vanherpe: AIBI is a European branch association which mainly deals with European affairs. Besides that, it facilitates bilateral relations and contacts amongst its members. The main tasks are monitoring the European development, especially in regulatory affairs, initiating common positions wherever it seems necessary and advocating specific branch interests, not only on the European level, but also by supporting our national members, e.g. by fighting against unjustified restrictions for bake-off in some countries.

What will be on the agenda in future? Of special concern are questions related to energy from renewable raw materials as some of our major raw materials are at stake. Wheat is one example, but it is not only wheat. What we are fighting for is a commonly agreed preference for food and an assured supply for food manufacturers. At the moment, many of our members are concerned that priority is given to energy. That leads – and has already led – to shortages in grain and oil seed supply, especially where raw materials from organic farming are concerned. Therefore, AIBI closely cooperates on the EU level with other organizations to achieve a readjustment or a reconciliation of conflicting targets.

Another important issue is the development of favorable 'nutrition profiles' which will guarantee all possibilities for advertising with health related and nutritional claims. Close observation is also required in respect of the development of the European law on hygiene. These provisions should be appropriate to the risk status of products and not only derived from the standards for microbiologically risky products.

A more technical issue where AIBI is concerned: The Commission proposed a regulation on enzymes according to which all enzymes should be banned except the ones having received specific authorization. This authorization will only be granted, based on a prior – and very expensive – risk assessment procedure which may cost 3 million Euros for each enzyme. Nobody is against safe and secure ingredients, but we should avoid 'innovative complacency'. So we support the idea that all enzymes, which are already on the market and which have proven to be safe should be exempted from such risk assessment.

+ bbi: In Bruges, the Bakery Federation of Russia joined AIBI. What will be the advantages for both sides? Do you see growing relations between the Eastern European/Russian and Western European bread markets?

+ Vanherpe: Historically, wide parts of Russia belonged to Europe. So it is self-evident that a European organization should not close the door to its Russian colleagues. We think that it is a good policy, in the long run, to start early with better relations, although our markets are still separated. Better mutual knowledge and a better flow of information always provides advantages, especially for those who know how to use better information. And presumably our markets will become integrated more closely in the future. Short-term advantages for both sides are better mutual understanding and a better knowledge of market potentials and market developments.

+ bbi: Until now, there have been more Western European products on the Eastern European markets than vice versa. What, do you think is the reason for this and where do you see the problems?

+ Vanherpe: All forecasts at the moment suffer from uncertainties, especially as nobody can reliably foresee the political main trends. But historical experience shows that opening markets come closer together – to mutual benefit. Therefore, from an economic point of view, we should belong to the pioneers, not to a delayed sector. With the recovery of the Russian economy, new investment in the modernization of existing plants has become possible. So why shouldn't Russia become competitive on European markets?

+ bbi: When joining western markets, who do you think has more chances: the Eastern European pastry industry or the bread industry?

+ Vanherpe: For fresh bread, there are more or less natural boundaries in the distribution range which do not exist for some pastry goods. But in respect of the fast growing sector of deep-frozen products, even bakery wares may be exchanged between East and West as is already the case amongst the Western European countries. The existing barriers of tariffs are generally expected to be decreased under the rules of WTO.

+ bbi: The market share of industrial bakeries including producers of frozen dough is growing in all Western European countries. What development do you expect to see in the market share of frozen dough in Western Europe in the next five to ten years?

+ Vanherpe: All experts forecast a further growth, and all available data would lead us to expect that the summit of these developments has not been reached yet. It is still an expanding market and not a 'ripe market'.

+ bbi: A new trend can be observed now: bread specialties with an artisan appeal, health and wellness ingredients etc. at an above average price. Is this only a short-term trend or something that will change the entire market and who will be the winner of this change?

+ Vanherpe: I personally believe that the “real art” will be to combine highly sophisticated and cost-efficient modern production with smart logistics and a high consumer confidence in the quality and safety of our products. Some sentimental allusions to traditional artisan presentation of the products may belong to the latter. But the consumer habits are differentiating: The new kids may prefer more convenience, a modern appeal with built-in added values with certain functionalities, while others will stick to more traditional habits. I think that we need to keep all developments in view and to segment our markets and presentations – not at least in view of a ‘grey haired’ Europe.

+ bbi: The prices for wheat and many other ingredients as well as energy have grown rapidly within the last 12 months. Will the price of products on the market rise accordingly or will this price increase limit the number of market participants?

+ Vanherpe: So far, Europe is a continent with different paces and different time lags. In some countries, the process of concentration has already come to an end; other countries

are at the very beginning. In general terms; in a highly competitive market you have to decide if you will grow as a partner of the big retailers. Then a policy of large scale is promising which means cost reduction and streamlining your assortment. Or do you want to become a specialist? Then niche strategies are the choice.

+ bbi: In some European countries you can find a fast growing market for organic food. It seems now that the European commission will accept some GMO contamination in organic food but consumer organizations are talking about this as being a ‘white elephant’. Will this have a severe effect on this market segment?

+ Vanherpe: I do not think so. If organic farming is not severely disturbed by the previously mentioned new energy policy, then we will have a further increase in this sector.

+ bbi: There is another problem. Brussels burdens the industry by restricting the driving time of truck drivers and prolonging their idle time. What will be the financial effect on the bread industry and how can this be handled?

+ Vanherpe: The weekly rest period of 45 hours en bloc for drivers is a really big problem for companies which deliver their products to the supermarkets 6 days per week. At the moment, we have diagnosed the problem, but have not yet found a solution. We are still working on it. +++



The new chairmanship of the AIBI

++ Guido Vanherpe, Belgium (center), Omer Bilgiseven, Turkey (right) and Georg Heberer, Germany (left)

Your future automatic **MECATHERM**

The TraD Divider

It provides an exceptional baguette quality



Manufacturer of automatic production lines

hearth or trays line will start with

revolution

at a lower ingredients cost



PRODUCT ADVANTAGES

Shelf-life 3 times longer

- + 20% Hydration
- floor or bowl resting time: up to 2 hours
- no degassing
- yeast cut by half
- divided dough doesn't stick, reducing flouring need
- no dough trim

Exceptional eating pleasure

- thin "short bite" crust
- wild open shiny inside structure
- rich inside texture
- outstanding flavour and easy bite

FINANCIAL ADVANTAGES

Savings

- increased flour yield due to higher hydration
- oil free
- possibility to work without improvers
- yeast cost drastically reduced

TECHNICAL ADVANTAGES

The TraDivider is a divider for hydrated dough with long bowl resting time

- slow division by gravity without tearing, and without compressing the dough
- dividing without oil
- lubricated with water
- it also allows green dough handling
- up to 3000 pieces / hour
- 500/1500 kg of dough per hour
- dividing range : between 200 g and 1000 g
- good weight precision
- hot water cleaning system included

Conception J.C. Strasbourg

MECATHERM