

# Shows provide an economic yardstick

Indicators that business confidence is returning were found recently at shows on both sides of the Atlantic.

At home, despite the news that the UK is still in recession, the PPMA Show 2009, although smaller than in recent years, was a good place to do business with smiles appearing on the faces of exhibitors and visitors alike. Pack Expo Las Vegas was equally buoyant with the PMMI reporting a similar return of confidence, while the international food show Anuga, in Germany, also reported increasing momentum.

Exhibitors were pleased with the level and quality of enquiries, and felt there were real prospects of confidence returning to the market.

Signs that the economy is no longer in danger of falling off the cliff could be found throughout the show. Chris Buxton, CEO, PPMA, said: "It was a real pleasure to be able to walk around the show and encounter so much first-hand evidence that customer-confidence appears to be returning.

"This does not mean the recession is over but proves that the PPMA Show is the perfect platform to do business.



*Footfall at the PPMA Show 2009 almost reached the 'holy grail' visitor density standard of one visitor for each square metre which, together with the glowing tributes from exhibitors, bodes well for Total Processing & Packaging 2010.*

"Next year the PPMA Show will be an integral part of Total Processing and Packaging providing an ideal opportunity to capitalise on the added value it will offer visitors and exhibitors."

PPMA president Alan Yates concurred saying the 2009 show was an "economic yardstick for the industry".

He explained: "With customers beginning to spend again, there were a number of

buoyant messages from exhibitors. Many were expecting a quiet show but the outcome was considerably better – sending a good message to the organisers and illustrating that shows are the best vehicle for suppliers and users to 'begin the trading process'."

Karen Cobbett, managing director, Springvale Equipment, said: "We were not expecting too much but we had the best show ever. The calibre of the visitors and the fact they were discussing 'live' projects made it very valuable."

Marden Edwards' sales manager Martin Gray, was also impressed: "Most surprising was the number of visitors with good quality enquiries and live projects. It shows that being able to 'kick the wheels' on a machine is still important."

Visitors were equally positive. Kathryn Cope, manufacturing manager, Del Monte, described the exhibition as "very informative and well presented". Other blue chip visitors were Asda, AstraZeneca, Boots UK, Cadbury, Dairy Crest, Diageo, GlaxoSmithKline, Hasbro UK, ICI Paints AkzoNobel, Kellogg's, Kimberly Clark, Nestlé, PepsiCo, Procter & Gamble, Reckitt Benckiser, Tesco Direct, Unilever and United Biscuits.

**See PPMA Show Review pages 14 – 16**

• Next year, the PPMA Show partners with Total Processing & Packaging which is held every three years. The next PPMA Show will take place in September 2011.

*Total Processing & Packaging 2010 (May 25 – 27, Birmingham NEC, UK).*

[www.totalexhibition.com](http://www.totalexhibition.com)

## Overseas momentum

Across the pond at Pack Expo Las Vegas the PMMI, the packaging and processing trade association which produces and sponsors the event, said: "Trade shows mirror the industries they serve, and the strong attendance may indicate an economic recovery as consumer goods companies leveraged the show for their capital equipment investments and packaging innovation efforts."

Visitor levels were just 1,000 down and overseas attendees on par with the 2007 event.

• Pack Expo International 2010 (October 31 – November 3, McCormick Place, Chicago) [www.packexpo.com](http://www.packexpo.com)

Anuga international food industry exhibition generated high-powered market momentum in Germany and abroad, said the organisers.

CEO Gerald Böse, stated: "Against the background of a difficult overall economic situation the fair attracted almost 153,500 trade visitors from more than 180 countries, with 61 per cent (about 93,500) coming from abroad. These figures were slightly lower than those for the previous event, but they remained stable overall."

The number of exhibitors – 6,522 suppliers from 97 countries – also remained stable, 84 per cent came from overseas. In addition, the sector generated interest by focusing on the topics of corporate social responsibility and sustainability.

Visitor turnout from the Middle East was particularly high, increasing by more than 30 per cent. The number of buyers from Asia rose by about 10 per cent.

[www.koelnmesse.de](http://www.koelnmesse.de)





## EAMA sees some signs of recovery

There are some signs that the pressure on manufacturing and particularly mechanical engineering is easing, says the Engineering and Machinery Alliance (EAMA).

Its August Business Monitor shows an increase in the number of companies reporting some improved investment activity. However, as expected with the holiday season affecting business, the improvement in enquiry and order levels reported over the previous two months was not maintained, particularly from exporters.

There were also more companies cutting jobs. But there is some anecdotal evidence of companies moving off short-time working and with the exhibition season in full swing this could signal an increase in activity levels (see show reports page 7).

On access to finance the numbers reporting greater difficulty in obtaining capital moved up again, but against this setback a few companies noted some easing.

EAMA chairman Martin Walder commented: "Companies are reporting that UK enquiries and orders have picked up better than export levels. To ensure a safe exit from the recession we must now do all we can to boost exports."

www.eama.info

# Recession hits machine exports and imports

Exports of UK packaging machines dipped by 25 per cent in the first half of 2009 to just under £78.5m (£104m). But processing machine exports rose by 13 per cent to reach almost £78m (£69m) on the back of strong demand from Eastern Europe.

Meanwhile UK imports of packaging equipment rose very slightly to £150.6m (£149.7m) while processing machine deliveries from overseas saw a modest decline of about 14 per cent on 2008 to £57.5m (£66.5m).

Weighing equipment exports held steady at £21.3m (£21.9m) thanks to a large increase in orders from Russia and Pakistan; imports were off 12 per cent at £5.4m (£6m).

The figures reflect the state of markets for machinery manufacturers. But the USA held up well for UK exporters although the near 20 per cent decline in the value of Sterling against the Dollar and Euro must be taken into account.

Chris Buxton, CEO, PPMA, said: "Given the severity of market conditions in the first half of the year, we are pleased that there seem to be some signs of recovery."

Packaging machine sales to the US were steady at £13.1m (£13.9m) and deliveries to Germany increased to £6.7m (£5.9m). But the troubled Irish economy saw sales collapse by 50 per cent to £4.1m (£8.6); China fell to £0.7m (£1.4m).

Bright spots were Poland up 15 per cent at £2.3m (£2m); Spain £5.3m (£3.5m) and Nigeria entered the top 20 list with purchases of £3.7m.

## Imports steady

Imports were virtually unchanged for packaging machinery, but show a relative decline when the drop in the Sterling against the Euro is taken into account.

Germany with sales of £57m (£55.4m) again dominated, followed by Italy with orders

steady at £31.1m (£34m), the USA £11.5m (£12.2m) and France £9.6m (£10.8m). Big declines were recorded by Switzerland £3.6m (£5.4m) and the Netherlands £4.6m (£7.1m).

## Process orders

UK process equipment suppliers fared better, but while the US remained the largest single market orders dropped considerably to £7.1m (£11.5m).

However this was more than offset by increases elsewhere. China registered a huge increase £6.7m (£0.6m), with Russia £1.6m (£1m), Poland £3.4m (-), South Africa £2.7m (£1.2m) and Nigeria £4.3m (£1m). Ireland was off almost 50 per cent with deliveries of £4.6m (£8.2m).

Process orders from overseas were generally down although German companies recorded a modest increase £15.9m (£14.2m) and the USA was unchanged at £7.2m. Imports from China £1.5m (£2.4m), Austria £1.7m (£3.4m) and Switzerland £950,000 (£2m) all showed steep declines.

For UK weighing equipment suppliers Russia topped the list at £2.8m (£0.5m) with Poland at £1.2m (£0.9m) and China £229,000 (£7,000) showing improvement. Pakistan £1.6m and Romania £400,000 both made the top 20. Biggest falls were Spain £1.5m (£3.6m) and USA £700,000 (£2.3m).

Weighing machine importers continue to find the UK market challenging but the major players, Germany £2m (£2.4m), Japan £1.2m (£1.4m) and Denmark £1.1m (£0.7m) all held up reasonably well.

• 2008 figures where available are shown in brackets.

• Figures compiled from HM Revenue & Customs statistics.



## Robot sales top £6m

Robotic equipment figures were analysed for the first time following the merger of the British Automation and Robotics Association (BARA) into the PPMA. UK exports of industrial robots, used extensively in the processing, packaging and handling sectors were £6.77m with sales to the USA and Hungary both above £1m; and almost £0.75m to Eire.

Imports stood at £16.8m - USA £7m, Germany £4.9m and the Netherlands £1m. Exports for robots used in welding functions were £10.5m with China and South Korea the strongest markets. Imports were £7.9m led by Japan, Sweden and Romania.

• Comparative 2008 figures are not available.

# Radix gets it all sorted

Specialist suppliers of electronic sorters to the food industry Radix Systems believes it is set to go places following its merger with Fowler Westrup Group, an international company based in India, specialising in post harvest agricultural machinery.

With sorters for herbs, carrots and other vegetables, nuts, pulses, breakfast cereals, the links are obvious.

“Radix will enable us to offer complete product cleaning lines to the industry,” said Mr Vijaykumar, managing director of Fowler Westrup (India).

Having just moved to new and larger premises in Winchester that have separate production and machine demonstration facilities, Radix now facilitates a ‘try before you buy’ philosophy for customers.

Radix has also unveiled its latest product, the “Blue Alert”, a compact unit designed to detect foreign bodies such as remnants of blue plastic; a common contaminant in frozen meats which cannot be



MC-C Autosorts at T-Brun, of Borken, Germany, features internet diagnostics facility.

detected by the standard metal detectors or by X-ray inspection. It is used as a final check before packing in such applications as ham for pizzas.

An enhanced range of automatic carrot sorter includes the Autosort MC-C. Now available in three sizes – 12, 24 and 36 lane systems equate to 7, 15 or 22 tonnes/hour of inputted carrots. It can also be fitted with an optional re-claim facility for acceptable product.

It removes up to 80 per cent of all colour, shape and size defects, has a three way sorting option and features chutes for both industrial and baby carrots.

A separate six way electronic grader, the MC-G is also available for customers that want to grade cylindrical produce such as carrots or gherkins into highly accurate diameter and length categories.  
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## BUSINESS BRIEFS

**CenFRA**, the centre for food robotics and automation, has helped Fosters Bakery, based in Barnsley, to introduce a 'baking robot' for unloading and loading a bread oven.

The robot is set to increase the capacity of the bakery's morning goods department by 50 per cent – with an estimated two year pay back.

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**Fortress Technology Europe** global sales have increased by 28 per cent for the first six months of 2009 compared with the same period last year, seeing sales in the UK alone up 13 per cent.

“Our sales growth is testament to the quality and reliability of our systems and service,” said Sarah Ketchin, managing director of Fortress Technology Europe.

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**Linkx Systems**, developers and suppliers of custom packaging machines, has moved to new premises in Beccles, Suffolk.

Formed just two years ago the move will help Linkx handle increasing demand for its products which, in the last trading year, saw turnover increase by almost 400 per cent to £1m.

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**Premier Tech**, the parent company of Chronos Richardson, has acquired packaging specialist Bag Treatment Holland (BTH). BTH will be merged with Chronos Richardson and will operate under the name Chronos BTH.  
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# Cryogenic freezing still the best

Despite advances in other technologies, cryogenic freezing remains the best method for many food manufacturers, according to a new report commissioned by Air Products –



LIN remains the most flexible and versatile options for many food manufacturers

‘Review of cryogenic versus mechanical freezers’.

Author, Dr Chris Kennedy, compared the latest innovations in freezing equipment and concluded that cryogenic freezing still offers significant cost, time and quality advantages over mechanical technologies.

He examined the benefits of mechanical versus cryogenic freezing techniques using both processing and end product parameters. The factors evaluated ranged from moisture loss and colour retention to the footprint, versatility and associated costs of mechanical and LIN- (liquid nitrogen) and

CO<sup>2</sup>-based equipment. These were measured against both existing and emerging technologies to gauge the all-round benefits of freezing equipment.

Latest developments in mechanical impingement freezing, cryogenic spiral freezers and the increased efficiency in heat transfer were examined. The study concluded that in spite of an increasing choice of mechanical freezing options, cryogenic systems remain superior in terms of speed, flexibility, moisture retention and overall quality.  
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