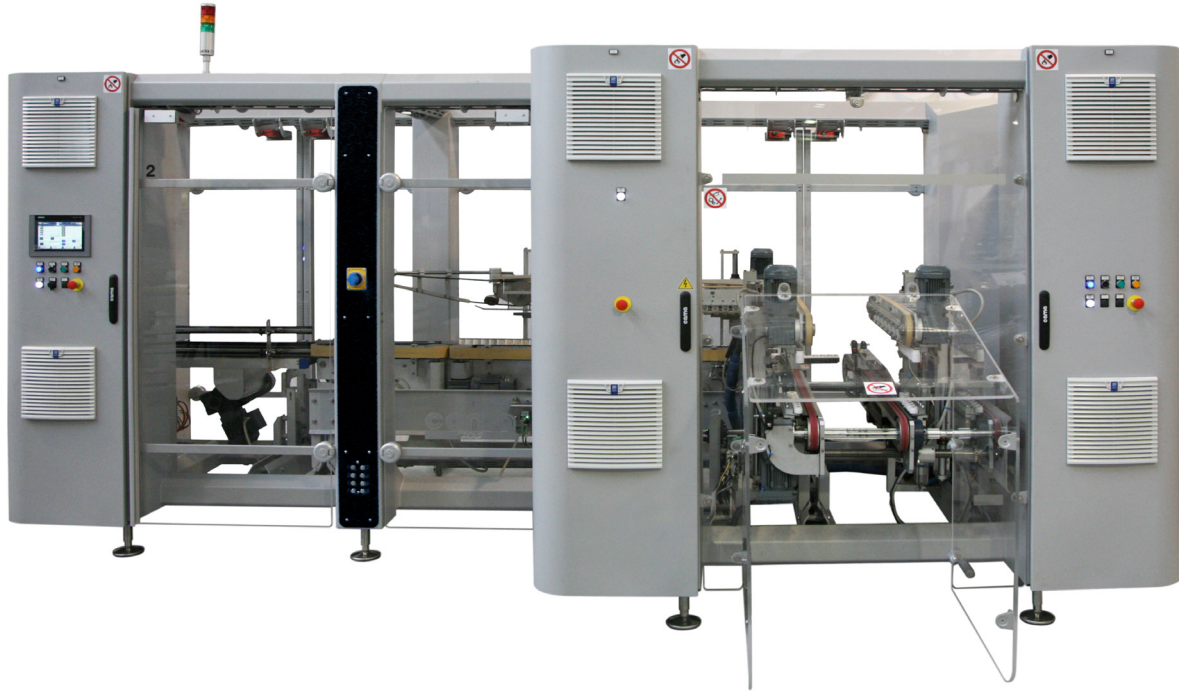




**Multiple varieties, countless flavours,
numerous containers – all matched
by integrated packaging solution**



Product variety may be essential to address market needs, but it can be painful for production and packaging. However, get the right machine-builder partner on board and you can package the pain away.

It's official, we spoil our pets! And why not? After all they are close members of our families.

Delighting pets everywhere, one result of this elevated familial status, is that the pet food industry has changed dramatically over the last decade. Our cats and dogs have a much wider range of ingredients, varieties, serving sizes, serving formats, diets and nutrition, all of which has to be packed in bespoke high-end containers, trays and cases. Some of this food is even packaged more appealingly than its human equivalent!

Maximum adaptability

Product variety is good for owners – and of course their pets – but it does present issues to production and packaging operations, which have to adapt to each individual format and packaging style, as the market demands

change and product cycles... cycle. Coupled to this is desire for owners to vary their pets' dietary intake, so multi-flavour multipacks are also commonplace.

Now imagine you run a pet food factory where, as well as your own product ranges, you also formulate and package entire series for other brands and supermarkets. With this huge variety of products, styles and formats, automation becomes a necessity, as packaging recipes change on an hourly basis. Flexibility and agility are the new core metrics, especially if a company wishes to remain competitive both financially... and inventorially.

Compounding these widely varying demands is a growing decline in plastic acceptance too, which is seeing a move back to metal and recyclable packaging, albeit in var



sizes. Pet food manufacturers have certainly got interesting times ahead and, as a result, so do the packaging technology companies that serve them.

Cama has recently worked with a company facing all of these challenges... and more! Owned by Cinven, Partner in Pet Food (PPF) is an innovative European pet food company, which produces branded pet food and own-label products for retailers. Headquartered in Hungary, it has operations in The Netherlands, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Poland. With nine factories across Europe, PPF stakes a claim to being the only market operator with an integrated pan-European production network, where it currently distributes products to more than 470 customers, including supermarkets, specialist pet shops, and veterinarians across 38 countries.

Market drive for higher quality

PPF admits that it faces the market challenges, explaining on its website: "The pet food industry is increasingly witnessing similar food trends to those influencing human diets, with owners demanding ever higher quality for their beloved animals. Providing full nutrition on a mono diet (the animal eats only pet food) requires the industry to operate to the highest standards. As part of that it is important to put in place high safety standards in order to, for example be able to provide details of provenance and full traceability through the production process."

According to Mark Chivers, Global Key Account Manager at Cama Group: "PPF knew it needed to invest in automation, but it was a little nervous having had a less than perfect experience from another machinery supplier. I think it is fair to say that it was a little nervous, so it was up to us at Cama to put PPF's minds to rest and give them the peace of mind that quality machinery companies do exist.

"The discussions took place over several months," Chivers elaborates, "and PPF emphasised repeatedly that it needed maximum quality but with

minimum risk. This may sound like normal 'sales talk' but in this case, due to the company's past experiences, it was essential that we delivered what we promised! In addition to the immediate short-term needs, PPF was well aware that further automation was a major part of the medium- and long-term roadmap, too. With this in mind scalability and ease of expansion also underpinned the wish list. The company's own pan-European presence was another factor which Cama was able to address, thanks to its own network of European agents and offices, including its new one in The Netherlands.

Maintaining standardisation

According to Robert Vrinssen, Project Engineer, at PPF: "The challenge is to maintain standardisation from format to format and pack to pack, but we have to balance this with multiple flavours, recipes, customers and packaging sizes. We need automation to help us handle the variety. Our customers often want new formats, even after agreeing initial ideas, when these fall within a range, it is not so much of a problem, but when they are outside it causes headaches. As a rapidly expanding manufacturer like us you must exploit automation in order to have access to immediate flexibility."



To help the company with its investment and automation roll out, Cama's first project involved the supply of an FA series box former and CD series closing machine, with PPF maintaining a manual box packing/filling step between the two. Although a relatively simple first step operationally, both machines are actually part of Cama's Breakthrough Generation (BTG), machines which are setting the standard in secondary packaging. They comprise contemporary automation solutions, including advanced rotary and linear servo technology, tightly coupled, in some models, to in-house-developed robotics, to deliver the all-important speed, flexibility and adaptability required by modern packaging operations. All of this advanced technology is housed within a modular, scalable framework that offer easy entry and access, coupled to a hygienic machine design.

"Ease of use was part of the brief too," Chivers explains, "luckily simplified operator interaction is a major part of our core offering. On this line there are multiple nationalities across the shifts. Although no one speaks the same language, thanks to the simplicity of our machine interface they can all speak Cama... fluently."

Investment delivers power and simplicity

"A lot of this simplicity has been enabled through our investment in advanced industry 4.0 technology, even on our more basic hardware," Chivers elaborates. "PPF recognises that AR and digitalisation are very much part of the future

too, which is another reason why it bought into our ethos. This digital interconnection, based on open platforms, is also why we are able to promise - and will ultimately deliver - the much more straightforward scalability and expansion PPF needs."

Vrinssen expands on this: "We researched the market and suppliers thoroughly using a decision matrix to narrow down a list of suppliers, who not only handled our packaging formats, but also had extensive experience of the pet food market. There were plenty that ticked one box, but very few that ticked both. We quickly realised that the automation concept that we could create using Cama-shaped building blocks, would allow us to invest and automate in stages. Cama's suite of commercial parts was a massive plus too. I am very cautious of ending up in a marriage with companies that do not use open standards. The thought and technology behind Cama's machines is really clever, but also very simple to use. As Mark Chivers says, I often see multiple nationalities operating these machines and there are never any issues."

Chivers concludes: "The current project is just a taste of what is to come. One of the key elements of this growing relationship is our shared vision. Both companies realise the future potential and we are in very regular discourse relating to both technological innovation and market demands - sharing experiences and insight, which are making the relationship even stronger."

Cama Group, since 1981, is an international leader in engineering and production of high-technology secondary packaging systems. We offer completely integrated packaging lines, from primary packages up to final packaging, ready for palletizing, serving the Food (Bakery, Confectionery, Coffee, Ice Cream, Dairy, Ready Meals, Grocery), Non Food (Personal, Health & Home Care) and Pet Food industries.
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