

MODIFORM, THE LEADER IN EUROPE FOR THERMOFORMING, IS 30 YEARS OLD

On the occasion of Flormart at Padova in September we met the sales director of Modiform, **Mr Leo Swart**, who gave us this interview together with the manager for Italy, **Mr Tony Christensen**.

What were the beginnings of Modiform?

It was a large family and Mr. van Heugten, as a hobby, built a packaging factory for food, sweets etc., in which the capital from the previous activity was invested. Initially, therefore, Modiform produced packaging for food, but since the regulations of this sector were becoming increasingly rigid, Mr. van Heugten and the sons, Dick van Heugten & Jan van Heugten, decided to change sector and started the production of thermoformed containers for floriculture and horticulture, which continues to this day.

What were the most important moments in these 30 years?

In the first place, it was decided to develop the complete sector of packaging for floriculture and horticulture, the second, to build a new plant in Scherpenzeel

*Mr. Leo Swart
(left) and Mr.
Dick van
Heugten*





Leo Swart and Tony Christensen



Product display

and the third, was the decision to produce thermoformed pots.

What are the reasons behind the quality of Modiform, so diverse and appreciated?

The owners have always said that quality must be excellent, we have always searched for the “Top”. The beginnings were difficult, as expected, especially to enter the market with a quality product and therefore more expensive. But the commitment and investment of the two brothers have created a product recognized for its quality.

Another important factor is the quality of the starting raw material, thanks to the ability to control the entire production process: in fact in 2008 the factory Scaldes BV was purchased (from 01/01/2011 it became Modiform Extrusion) for the direct processing and transformation of the raw materials.

What is the position of Modiform on the market?

Only 5 years ago we started the production of thermoformed pots with excellent results, later we'll see .. In the field of thermoformed containers we are the leader in Europe and this position was achieved through the commitment, enthusiasm and effort from all of us: every day is a new day for us all and we try to give 100% of ourselves. Modiform currently employs 170 people in the three factories in the Netherlands (Leusden, Scherlpenzeel and Renswoude). At Renswoude there is also the logistics center where more than 1,500 products are assembled for shipment.



The Modiform Stand in IPM for the 30th anniversary celebrations

What ecological commitments has Modiform? In the use of biodegradable other materials?

We are very interested and attentive, because this is a very important and sensitive argument for everyone, but for the moment, materials better than plastic for our products do not exist. We also agree that it is not the best for the environment, but if we produced biodegradable pots using maize we would need millions of hectares and the FAO would say, why use food for making pots?

As early as January 1990 we started the collection of used products supplied by us all over Europe: they are washed, dried, reduced to shavings then granules, which are remelted eliminating the remaining waste, and finally transformed to laminated plastic for thermoforming. Currently, in trays we are able to recycle from 80% to 100% of these products.

When there is a biological product suitable for packaging, believe me, the first utilization will be in the packaging of food, which consumes much greater quantities of packaging than horticulture. Supermarkets are also strongly interested in bio-products and the trends towards the “green” economy. At all events, as soon as there is something really serious and practicable we will be the first to use it.

Last question to Leo Swart: Why does he consider the Italian market so important?

The importance we give to the Italian market is also demonstrated by our presence at Flormart, Padova, with this beautiful stand.



*Modern
packaging
(right)*

I have always loved Italy, where for at least ten years I have spent my holidays with the family. For us, the high level of Italian style is an example to imitate for the creativity that stimulates us to meet the competition, also because we want our products to become even more beautiful and attractive. Furthermore we also have an efficient distribution network.

We ask Tony Christensen: Why has Modiform obtained this great success also in Italy?

Underlying everything is the great spirit of collaboration and mutual respect between the owners and the employees in field of production, but also between sales managers in the different countries that at periodic reunions make the best contributions in a friendly and absolutely uncompetitive atmosphere.

The commitment of the two owners, Dick van Heugten & Jan van Heugten, the first addressed to commercialization, the second to production and product innovation, is as an added value to the company, in which the management is seen as listening and service, more than as authority.

Mr. Jan van Heugten recognized the potential of a young collaborator, Mr. Gert-Jan Smal to whom he transmitted his own experience, transforming him into a true “genius” in discerning the ideal course of development for each product according to the needs of users also and above all in the minimum detail, that makes the difference in terms of quality. Before undertaking the production of a new model, users are regularly contacted, the producers of transplanting machinery



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and the suppliers of substrates and their needs are carefully considered.

The current commitment consists in collaborating with the largest companies in the production of “packaging” for better presentation and promotion of plants on the market.

An example is to prepare packaging and marketing that attracts consumers, such as multipot containers for aromatic herbs with pictures and descriptions of the product, because women are familiar with the aromas but do not recognize the various plants themselves.



Modiform thermoformed containers

The packaging must have a pleasing design, it must be functional, protecting



Customers waiting in line to order Modiform products...!



Tony Christensen with Italian and international visitors.

*International visitors (right).
Modern packaging examples (below)*



the plant, resisting transport, eco-friendly or recyclable and damage proof.

That attention is particularly important, above all for a market like the Italian one that supplies plants of excellent quality recognized throughout Europe.

Much of the success of Modiform in Italy is also due to the figure of Mr Tony Christensen who always demonstrates an open availability, without presumption, always with a positive attitude towards everyone, careful to understand the needs of clients and to offer the best solutions.