

## ▶ COMPANY — BITBURGER BREWERY, GERMANY

# Expansion plans without a lot of noise?

*The export business of the Bitburger Brewery Group should continue to grow profitably – starting from Bitburg!*

In view of the weak times in the Western European brewery industry, those responsible for the German Bitburger Brewery Group are satisfied with last year's balance sheet. The German market leader in the gastronomy sector sold a total of 4 million hectoliters (hl) in 2011 (2010: 3.9 million hl).

The flagship of the enterprise, the Bitburger brand, increased its sales by 2.5% in comparison with the previous year. Germany's number-one draft beer brand is defending its market leadership in gastronomy and increased its market shares in the food retail and cash-and-carry beverage markets (Nielsen: January-October 2011). In addition to growth in the important pilsner beer segment, this result is also attributable to increased sales of export products, of the standard mixed beverages such as beer-and-lemonade ("Radler") and cola beer, and of the alcohol-free beverages.

"Our export division achieved profitable growth in the past year and is increasing faster than the market. We are

*The Bitburgers are now casting an eye on the Far East. Yet Werner Wolf will have difficulty gaining a foothold in Asia if his idea is simply to target the "Far East". Instead, the Bitburgers appear to be waiting to see what the competition has planned.*



active in over 60 countries on 5 continents," says Dr. Werner Wolf, chairman of the board of Bitburger Brewery Group, as he explains the group's foreign activities so far. The main brands, namely, Bitburger, König Pilsner, and Köstritzer, are popular in other countries, but so are Licher and Wernesgrüner as well. As for the exact numbers – the company plays its cards close to its chest, volunteering little if any precise information. Concrete data on the individual brands or on total volume/sales in the export area are not published.

## Foreign Market, Yes – but Nothing Concrete

The domestic market is obviously the most important one in terms of sales and volume. But international business will continue to gain importance for the brewers from picturesque Bitburg in coming years and will play an increasingly important role in the company's growth strategy. There does not appear to be a single royal road leading to all the different countries. ▶12

## SPECIAL ED SECTION

## SMI Group launches a new cost saving bottling line

A strong commitment to innovation and respect for the environment brought SMI to design "ex-novo" a complete bottling plant for still and sparkling water at Stella Alpina plant in Mojo de Calvi. The new SACS (Stella Alpina Cost Saving) line was devised, designed and created by SMI - over a surface area of just 800m<sup>2</sup> - to produce up to 14,400 bottles per hour in a more efficient and economical way compared to the pre-existing bottling plant at that spring.

Advanced technical solutions enable to significantly lower the costs of production of every Stella Alpina bottle, in the full respect of the surrounding environment. If compared to the pre-existing bottling plant, SACS has delivered huge results in terms of compact footprint, energy saving, production efficiency, operating flexibility and TCO (Total Cost of Ownership).

The new line is made up essentially of just two machine blocks which, conveniently integrated, allow for lower costs and consumption. The first block consists of the primary packaging unit Ecobloc Plus, an integrated system of stretch-blow moulding, filling / capping and labelling, thus providing consistent cutbacks in terms of initial investment, maintenance costs and energy consumption. The secondary packaging unit, designed by SMI from scratch and named, Pack Bloc, is an innovative shrink film packaging system which includes high integration between the shrinkwrapper and the palletiser; this solution has allowed for the area occupied by the end-of-line machines to be much smaller than usual due to the dramatic reduction in the quantity of conveyors connecting them. The consumption of water used for cleaning the plant has been reduced by up to the 90%, thanks to the "baseless" technology applied to the filler, which allows for the base of the machines to be "freed" from moving components and mechanical parts, where dirt and waste from the production process usually accumulates. ● (si)

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