



## Water bottling in Georgia

# The country of the five toasts

In the heart of the Caucasus region, Georgia is one of the richest nations in mineral and thermal waters, even if its large-scale marketing is a fairly recent activity, entrusted to leading companies such as Aqua Geo.



In this state of the former USSR, on the border between Europe and Asia, squeezed between the mountains of the Caucasus and the Black Sea, one is struck by the richness of the waterways and the fertility of the land, which is almost entirely cultivated, with the exception of the highest peaks in the Svaneti region, which reach up to 5,000m above sea level. Not surprisingly, the name "Georgia" derives from the Greek term "georg", used to indicate agriculture. Georgia has an ancient history for the cultivation of vines and the production of wine, as evidenced by the archaeological finds of the oldest winery in the world with some traces dating up to 8,000 years ago. In the last decade, however, the Georgian economy has come on in leaps and bounds, moving from an almost exclusive dependence on wine

production to a diversification into new sectors, such as the production of beverages and carbonated waters.

Thanks to investments made by the food & beverage companies, Georgia today boasts excellent production of lemonade and beer, while the mineral water sector is constantly expanding. This phenomenon requires the use of increasingly advanced bottling and packaging technologies, such as those used by the company Aqua Geo Ltd in its carbonated water production plants under the "Kobi" brand and natural water under the "SNO" brand. To automate the bottling and packaging process, the Georgian company turned to SMI for the supply of numerous turnkey plants, which include a line for PET bottles and one for glass bottles in the Kobi plant and

two end-of-lines for the secondary and tertiary packaging of SNO natural water at the Misaktsieli plant, near the village of Natakhtari, a few kilometers from the capital Tbilisi. The two brands of mineral water marketed by Aqua Geo, SNO and Kobi, owe their name to the geographical position of the two springs from which the product flows.

## SMI solutions for Kobi

The Kobi water bottling plant is a demonstration of the large investments being made in the beverage and natural mineral water industry in Georgia; a great challenge, in a country where history and culture are deeply linked to wine production. Since its foundation, the Aqua Geo company has always had the main aim of equipping itself with modern technologies, to create a high, quality, product capable of equaling the mineral waters present on the main European markets. This is an objective that the Georgian company is able to achieve everyday thanks to severe laboratory tests on the water from the source and the finished product, modern and sophisticated control systems for the entire production process and continuous monitoring of the packaging and distribution process. SMI, which has been collaborating with Aqua Geo since 2011, has been involved in the important development project of the Kobi brand and has designed, built and installed two bot-

ting lines side by side: one for 0.33l and 0.5l glass bottles and the other for 0.5l, 1l and 1.5l PET bottles. The logistic configuration of the two lines side by side allows space and costs to be optimised, due to the fact that both use the same area for raw materials and the same unloading and storage area for the finished pallets ready for distribution.

#### Production line for PET bottles:

- Ecobloc Ergon integrated system for carbonated products – production up to 10,800 bph
- Containers worked: 0.5l, 1l and 1.5l bottles in PET for carbonated water
- LSK 40F Ergon shrinkwrapper – production up to 40 packs/min
- Packs created: bundles in film only in 3x2 (1l and 1.5l bottles) and 4x3 (0.5l bottles) formats

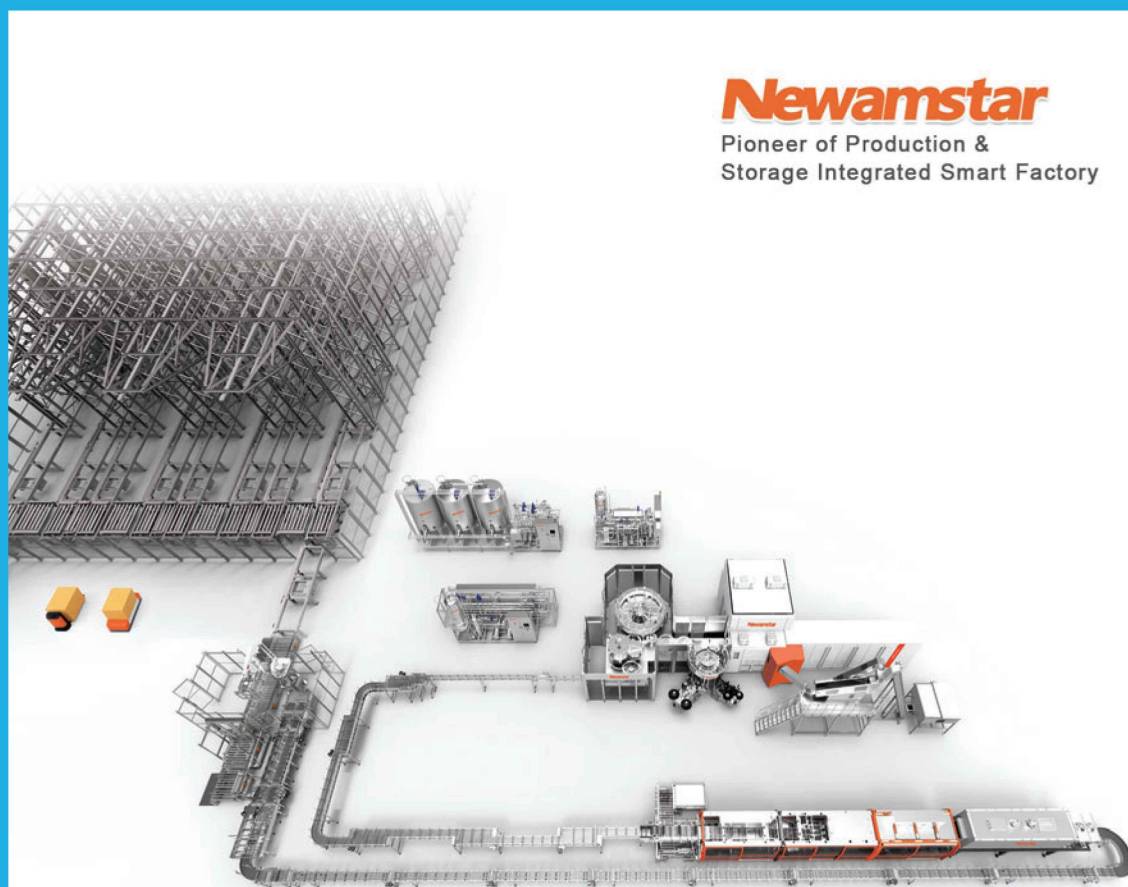
#### SMI solutions for SNO

The growing demand for SNO natural water has required new investments, for the expansion and modernisation of two end-of-lines at the Misakt-sieli plant. Working in close collaboration with the Aqua Geo team, SMI engineers designed an automatic solution for secondary and tertiary packaging optimised for the production needs of the Georgian company's plant; the primary objective of the new intervention was to increase the production efficiency of the lines for the bottling and packaging of 0.5l and 1.5l PET bottles of SNO water.

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#### Complete end of line - PET 24,000 bph including:

- CSK 50F Ergon shrinkwrapper – production up to 50 packs/min
- Products worked: 0.5l and 1.5l bottles in PET
- Packs created: bundles in film only in 6x4 and 4x3 (0.5l) and 3x2 (1.5l) formats
- Conveyors to carry the loose product from the out feed of the filler monobloc, accumulation conveyors before and after the labeller and conveyors to carry the packs between the packer and the palletiser
- Handle applicator HA 60
- APS 1550 Ergon palletiser with rotating arm wrapper
- Packs worked: bundles arriving from the CSK 50F Ergon packer
- Pallets created: europallet 800x1,200 and 1,000x1,200



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