

Titanic Distillers Plans Global Expansion

Titanic Distillers is looking to hit profitability by 2027 as the Northern Ireland-based business plans moves into several new markets.

The Irish whiskey business, which recently secured a £5m (\$6.3m) investment from fund manager Whiterock, is using the cash to expand into new markets, including North America, Asia and Africa.

The Belfast-based group is in talks with importers to launch in Malaysia and Singapore. It is also close to finalising distribution for several East Coast states in the US. "The plan is to be available in three to five states within the US by the end of the year".

The recent funding will be used to build a new team to manage its US business. One of the key hires is expected to be a chief revenue officer, who will help the business grow in New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania before proceeding to expand the product to other states.

The business hopes to gain entry to South Africa and is also looking to expand its European presence with a launch in Poland and Belgium forecasted for this year. Its main markets in Europe include the UK, Republic of Ireland, France and Germany.

The latest £5m cash injection brings the group's total funding raised to date to around £14m, with £9m having gone towards establishing Titanic's distillery in Thompson Dock, which became operational in 2023.

LABEL-FREE BOTTLES: THE NEW ECO-DESIGN SOLUTION

Appealing and Trendy Containers

Packaging is a strategic element for the commercial success of any product, as it can impact both profitability and corporate sustainability policies.

In primary packaging solutions, sustainability is expressed through creativity, with the design of visually appealing containers that capture consumers' attention, and through functionality, with the development of lightweight, rPET, and label-free bottles.

Label-free bottles are an increasingly popular trend among food and beverage manufacturers. For example, in Portugal, Carvalhelhos, a company that has always prioritised sustainability and environmental responsibility, produces new PET and rPET containers without plastic labels, thanks to the EBS 8 KL ERGON stretch-blow moulder by SMI.

SMI Solution for Carvalhelhos

Carvalhelhos blow moulder not only produces traditional PET and rPET bottles that require label application, but it is also equipped with specialised moulds designed by SMIMEC for the stretch-blow moulding of 0.33 L, 0.5 L, and 1.5 L

flat-bottom rPET bottles without paper or plastic labels. This eco-friendly solution eliminates the need for glue and additional paper or plastic materials, simplifying the recycling process and ensuring higher purity in recycled PET.

The area dedicated to the label has been removed, eliminating the ribs typically found in traditional bottles. Therefore, an innovative combination of embossed and debossed engravings

on the bottle body provides additional space for the brand logo and essential product information, which would traditionally appear on a label. This approach also allows for the inclusion of information in braille.

Beyond its environmental benefits, this solution aligns with Carvalhelhos' aesthetic and branding needs, helping the new bottle stand out on store shelves and attract consumer attention.

Advantages for the Environment and the Consumer:

Eco-friendly solution, as the PET bottle is 100% recyclable, better compliance with environmental regulations regarding recycling, easier recycling process, since there is no label to remove. Even when made from recyclable materials, labels on traditional bottles must be separated from the container during recycling, no need for glue in label application and reduced packaging waste, resulting in less material to recycle.

Advantages for the Bottler:

Reduced costs for raw material purchases (labels and glue), lower storage costs for raw materials, simplified and optimised production process, as a labelling machine is no longer required, and easier and more efficient PET recycling, since there is no need to separate the label from the container.

AG Barr to Pull Strathmore

AG Barr intends to scrap bottled water brand Strathmore. The brand is to be discontinued later in its 2025/26 financial year

AG Barr said the move to cease producing Strathmore could result in the closure of its manufacturing site in Forfar in Scotland.

The move was announced alongside the release of AG Barr's latest results for its 2024/25 fiscal year, which ended on 25 January.

AG Barr, which produces Irn-Bru, Rubicon, Boost and Funkin, said "current trading is in line with our expectations" and kept its annual outlook for the financial year 2025/26 "unchanged", forecasting continued revenue growth and margin improvement.

The scrapping of the Strathmore brand follows an "organisational simplification" of the business which the company said was announced to staff in February. The move sees the integration of Barr Soft Drinks and the Funkin cocktails businesses into a "unified AG

Barr operation, streamlining activities and fostering synergies".

In its full-year fiscal period, AG Barr's revenue rose by 5.1% to £420.4m, driven by "strong" performance in its soft drinks segment, particularly a "standout performance" from Rubicon and "continued strong growth" from Irn-Bru.

The business also reported a 6.5% increase in gross profit, at £164.3m, while operating profit was up 3.2% year on year to £51.7m. Profit before tax grew 3.7% to £53.2m.

Giving Shape to Ideas

The quality of the moulds installed on the rotary stretch-blow moulders, necessary for the production of the containers, and the efficiency in the stretch-blow moulding process are two fundamental elements to obtain quality bottles that attract the attention of consumers.

SMI, through its subsidiary SMIMEC, takes care of the entire production phase of the moulds installed on stretch-blow moulding machines. To meet the needs of customers who wish to produce both traditional bottles intended for label application and bottles without labels, SMIMEC manufactures special couplings to be inserted in the moulds mounted on SMI stretch-blow moulders. Size changeover operations to switch from one type of bottle to another are extremely simple and fast as it is sufficient to replace the plug section in the mould.

Although the design change may seem simple, in reality such an operation represents a major change from a marketing point of view, as it

promotes circular economy and helps to evolve the way brands communicate

with their customers and differentiate themselves on shop shelves.

Innovating to Anticipate the Future

For 25 years, SMIMEC's activity has been characterised by competence, professionalism, passion and creativity. Innovation is a key factor for constant improvement and SMIMEC seizes all the opportunities offered by changes thanks to a pro-active approach to market demands.

In order to carry out countless processes on behalf of third parties and offer a wide range of high quality, precision components in compliance with current regulations, the SMI Group's mechanical workshop has a state-of-the-art machine park, continuously renewed, which meets the needs of the most demanding customer.

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