

Producing powder products in Poland

By Henning Mortensen

As a fine symbol of the optimism which is characteristic of the new Poland, the company Mokate has in no time built two new plants equipped with high-tech spray drying equipment from the Danish firm Niro A/S. At one blow, this investment has made Mokate the sovereign market leader of a number of powder products in Poland.

Mokate's story shows what efficiency and foresight can lead to when boosted by a new economic and political climate. Soon after the fall of the Berlin Wall, which swept a breeze of change



across the old Eastern Europe, Teresa Mokrysz, dynamic managing director of Mokate, was on a plane bound for London when she happened to meet a Polish sales agent from a Dutch firm selling coffee whitener. As a result of this meeting, and after long-standing negotiations with the public authorities, Mokate started to bulk-import coffee whitener from the Netherlands for packing and redistribution in Poland.

Own production

Subsequently, Mokate has spread its activities but with the decisive difference that today Mokate itself manufactures a large number of powder products based on Polish milk powder. The management conceived this idea at the Anuga FoodTec exhibition in Cologne where they got into contact with Niro. This was the beginning of a cooperation which has taken Mokate a huge leap forward in terms of development in just a few

years, and today the company is a sovereign market leader of a number of powder-based products. Especially cappuccino powder has become very popular in the Polish market for convenience food. In 1991 Mokate began importing and retail packing cappuccino powder from the Netherlands. At that time hardly anyone in Poland had heard of this Italian-origin product, let alone tasted it. On a small scale, Mokate set up production but the demand was much bigger than expected. So three years ago, Mokate took a giant leap forward and bought its first Niro spray drying plant. The previous years had indeed shown that the Polish people had developed a taste for cappuccino, so much actually that Poland now has the second highest per capita cappuccino consumption in the world. A bold marketing campaign featuring a popular singer appeared in a number of TV commercials over three weeks in the best airtime in the autumn of 1991 and made sales explode. As a result the high market profile could be maintained and in this way created the basis for Mokate's own investment in a new production plant which has been running at full capacity since January 2000 in the town of Ustrón in southern Poland, not far from the Czech and Slovak borders.



Mokate's new production plant in southern Poland will be running at full capacity from autumn this year.

Based on this success, Mokate is now setting up the most modern spray drying plants in the world, also from Niro, not far from Ustrón in the town Zory. A well-timed investment both in relation to the anticipated Polish EU accession and to the considerable increase in cappuccino consumption all over the world.

Market saturation

Prime mover of this dynamic development has been Teresa Mokrysz, who made that contact on her way to London ten years ago and thus launched a true Polish industrial adventure. Teresa Mokrysz told SDI that 14% of the aggregate coffee consumption in Poland today is cappuccino. Mokate's market share is 60-70%. The Polish women, who have always been early adopters, are the biggest group of cappuccino drinkers but the Polish men have also developed a taste for the product, especially the younger ones up to the age of 25. Since it is mostly the women who do the daily shopping in the new hypermarkets, which are shooting up in Poland these years, Mokate's marketing activities are primarily directed towards these women. Studies also show that 93% of the first-time cappuccino users will buy it again, but the market is about to reach its saturation point, is the

assessment of observers within the retail business in Poland.

Owing to the market situation, Mokate is making great efforts to penetrate the export markets. With a well-established home market and a top-modern production plant, Mokate seems to have every chance of succeeding, thanks also to a high quality product range.

Today considerable exports go to the neighbouring countries Russia, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia, and – believe it or not – Italy, United Kingdom, Sweden and the US, and perhaps soon Denmark. Even today Mokate exports some 30% of the production and one of the target markets which has great priority is China where the potential is estimated to be enormous. As it appears, the export trade is aimed at countries with very high product safety demands, and Mokate has built a modern quality laboratory at the new plant in the town of Zory which ensures that both the milk constituent, in this case instant skimmed milk powder, and the end product are tested. In addition



Teresa Mokrysz, managing director of Mokate, set the ball rolling.

tion to the chemical bacteriological tests, shelf life (for cappuccino 12 months) and aroma density are tested. The fine aroma and the hot frothy milk are the secrets behind a good cup of cappuccino. No shipments leave the plant before they have been approved by the qualitative tests. A staff of skilled technicians, laboratory assistants and manager *Ewa Lukaszewicz*, MSc Dairy Technology, are responsible for these activities.

Next to the quality laboratory, Mokate has built a product development centre. Mokate is aware that the modern retail trade constantly craves new products from its suppliers. And the Mokate product range has been expanded: though cappuccino powder is still the main product, the product range also includes coffee creamer, chocolate drinks, instant cocoa, instant coffee and a dietetic product called Mokatella.

Details of equipment

What kind of equipment has Niro supplied to the new plant that has made Mokate market leading in Poland so far and stepped up ex-

Polish women, in particular, have developed a taste for cappuccino.





Niro's SANICIP™ CIP-able Bag Filter installed at Mokate's new plant in Poland.

Relatively soon after the installation of the first plant Mokate's plant was operating round-the-clock.

To keep up with the market demand, it was decided last year to install yet another plant identical to the first one, only with bigger capacity. The new drying plant is, however, equipped with the latest technology within powder recovery. The cyclones and traditional bag filter have been omitted and replaced by SANICIP™ CIP-able Bag Filter (see photo). This offers the following advantages:

- ◆ Simple plant layout
- ◆ Reduced space requirements
- ◆ Reduced power consumption
- ◆ Recycling of all powder in the process, i.e. no loss
- ◆ Less ductwork, which means less powder deposits
- ◆ Production possible of high fat powders.

Like the first plant the new one is fully computerised with data logging system enabling the management to follow the production and trace product quality by means of a professional taste panel which tests the products systematically on a daily basis.

The new plant is scheduled for production during the summer of 2001.

With its latest investment, Mokate is better prepared than most companies to retain a solid position in the enlarged EU, of which Poland will hopefully be an integral part in a few years. ■

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ports to a number of countries? In the town of Ustrón, Niro has installed a complete plant including raw material reception in the form of for instance milk powder and maltodextrin, explains *Vagn Westergaard*, MSc Dairy Technology and a Niro sales manager. He has 30 years of experience in the spray drying business which has made him a world-leading expert in his field.

The installation also consisted of wet mixing equipment including mixing tanks, pasteurisers/coolers, homogenisers, storage tanks, etc., as well as a spray drying plant, including feed system, drying chamber, powder separation with cyclones and a bag filter.

According to *Vagn Westergaard* Mokate realised very early in the

project that a comprehensive research and development forum was necessary for development of products based on regional raw materials that could match or even outperform the imported products. It was therefore decided to install a pilot plant similar to the industrial plant. The pilot plant was commissioned well in advance of the big plant in order to enable the product specialists to find the right regional raw materials and composition to be ready with the recipe and processing conditions when the big plant was installed for commercial production.

The pilot plant now serves as a tool for product development and/or new raw material testing to constantly keep Mokate's products up to the competitive market.