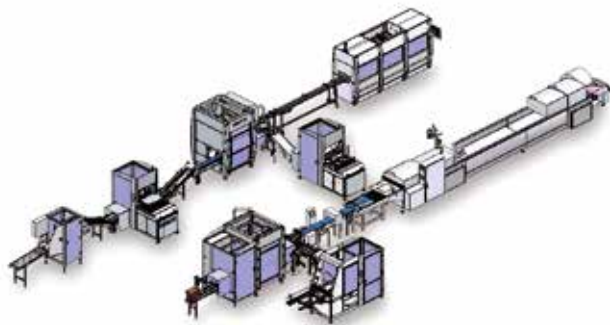


Single-controller in a turnkey packaging line

Build a relationship with a single project



Mecapack, a specialist manufacturer of primary and secondary packaging machines has recently developed a turnkey packaging line. Working in close cooperation with Omron has enabled the company to base its concept on a single line controller, a strategically important step forward, with which Mecapack intends to satisfy customer expectations both in its French home market and in the rest of the world.

A member of the Proplast group, French manufacturer Mecapack develops and manufactures packaging machines, including tray sealing systems, thermoforming equipment, case forming and case packing solutions. They have recently integrated Création Technique (now called Idpack) into the business, strengthening their expertise in secondary packaging machines. The company's nine R&D engineers, working in a 23-person Research Department, add value to the company, while Omron has been providing expertise in sequential logic and motion control to Mecapack for more than 15 years.

A complete turnkey packaging line

"These days our customers look for machines which can work at high speed and with increased capacity," says Benoît Méfort, responsible for Development at Mecapack. "But they also want to build a relationship with a single Project Manager who can offer a global solution for both primary and secondary packaging. This is what we have been working to establish for the past five years."

Cyrille Couloigner, in charge of Mecapack's Automation Research Department, adds: "We have developed from being a manufacturer of individual machines towards becoming a supplier of engineering solutions. We owe this evolution directly to the development of Omron technology." Benoît Méfort explains that Mecapack has been working continually on the reliability and operation of a global full-line concept, while integrating third-party products such as metal detection systems and labelling machines: "We're introducing into packaging lines notions of production efficiency which are well known in the automotive industry, while reducing product-format changeovers to the minimum. Every second means a lot to us!"

Industrialized development

As part of this project, one of Mecapack's objectives is to streamline machine conception, which will reduce delivery times - among other benefits. To achieve this, the company is deploying Omron's Sysmac platform, which puts the entire line under the same logic of control and parameter setting. "Many of our customers are in favour of this rationalization," says Serge Pitois, Product Manager at Mecapack, although he notes that "A single controller means a complete change in strategy."



The benefit of a single controller

Benoît Méfort adds that "This is where the Omron team add their expertise to our knowledge, and answer any queries that might arise on our side. Our partnership with Omron allows us to achieve the performance levels that we had initially set as an objective, which is important with new technologies.

You could look at this as a joint investment by Omron and Mecapack, and I do want to emphasise the fact that the Omron team is always very reactive when we need help!"

According to Serge Pitois, deploying a single controller such as the Sysmac platform is the only way to create a complete packaging line which can meet expectations in terms of performance, and of return on investment and costs. Mecapack integrates a sequence of automation products and Delta-2 robots – developed internally, with motors and control by Omron - that fit into the single line-controller concept. Ethernet connectivity means the controller can also communicate with the multi-articulated robots used in the case-packing stage.

This consistency in the sequential functions and motion control is much appreciated because it allows shorter format changeover times. It also allows remote maintenance and diagnosis of the complete line through a single communication entry point. These are significant benefits for both the end user and Mecapack.

Mecapack is going global

80 % of Mecapack's customers are in the food and beverage sector, but the company also manufactures machines for the pharmaceutical, medical, and supply chain (secondary packaging) sectors. Larger food manufacturers and large or medium size supermarkets will also turn more and more to primary packaging. One third of Mecapack's turnover presently comes from France, but there is a strong desire to develop the company's global activities, a strategy which can be supported by Omron's extensive international network.

