

World of pallets

Logistics Business presents recent developments from two pallet manufacturers.

One world, one brand

The WORLD-pallet brand was established in 2008, with the idea of breaking what the founders saw as the monopolistic structure of the open pallet exchange pool. The new brand was to rely on an independent system in place for decades: the re-usable, freely exchangeable euro pallet in the standard 800 x 1,200 mm format. The short term goal was a high quality pallet for Europe-wide service to all industries - in the long term they planned to establish a global standard.

Since then millions of wooden pallets have been manufactured and distributed throughout Europe. Thanks to advanced manufacturing processes, strict quality standards, consistency in the product and good value for money, their products have received a particularly strong welcome in industries which frequently employ new pallets.

The WORLD-pallet brand is being implemented worldwide in pursuit of the company's aim to standardise the logistics market for wooden pallets, allowing for greater efficiency and associated benefits to large scale manufacturers, retailers, and shippers. Following success in Europe, the Americas office was established in late 2012, and it is laying the foundations for a network of producers in North America.

The company are continuing to improve their pallets in an attempt to drive supply chain efficiency - which is perhaps a little surprising when the euro pallet is such a fixture of the industry. They are returnable and exchangeable, high-rack stackable and employ RFID technology. They have also been market tested and employed for 5 years in industrial and commercial sectors including pharmaceuticals, iron and steel, automotive, construction,

packaging and food. They also function well in fully automated processes such as during loading and removal, in high-bay warehouses and in materials handling and conveyor systems.

The licensee, *Falkenhahn AG*, has been manufacturing the pallets in Europe for five years with a production capacity of 10 million pallets a year. Utilising just-in-time logistics and its own fleet, Falkenhahn have demonstrated the speed and flexibility to deliver to customers all over Europe.

Pharma packing participation

Pharmaceutical manufacturer MSD Merck Sharp & Dohme, a leading provider of medications, vaccines, biologic therapies, consumer health and animal health products, has switched to using *Cabka IPS* plastic pallets to store its products and ship them from its operational centre in Belgium. This means that pharmaceuticals can actually be stacked onto pallets in the aseptic production room - cleanly, hygienically and free from any bacteria.

Clean and clinical plastic pallets are ideal for sterile environments, because even the tiniest trace can contaminate medication and wooden pallets can potentially give off dust or bring in fungi and insects. Hygiene even plays a dominant role in peripheral areas where vials, bottles or tubes that are in contact with the product are put into boxes and cartons. This is where Cabka's products, such as the light 'Eco E5' plastic pallet, have a clear advantage. The Eco E5 is clean, environmentally friendly, and made of recycled materials.

At MSD Heist Operations, the material flow processes for pharmaceutical production are extremely complex. In his receiving warehouse, Warehouse Manager Jan Baert has to deal with approximately 400 raw materials and active ingredients for pharmaceuticals,

and about 7,600 different packaging components. More than 1,000 suppliers deliver on various load carriers, mainly wooden pallets. Again, for sanitary reasons, these cannot simply be sent straight to production and the products therefore must be picked on hygienic plastic pallets.

MSD Heist Operations ships products in over 150 million packaging units every year, and plastic pallets have proved to be an important factor in sustainable cost optimization. Baert participated in organizing the internal material flow re-launch: "Our receiving warehouse had to deal with various types of pallets, all made of wood. After we were no longer allowed to bring those near production, we decided to package all goods for production on a uniform plastic pallet."

Plastic pallets are also used in the packaging areas at the end of each sterile production line. In the zones downstream from the production lines, medicinal products in vials, flasks, tubes and cans are packed into larger box units, which are then stacked onto pallets. At the end of production, the boxes are manually repackaged onto the Eco E5 plastic pallet for storage and shipping. This three-skid pallet is made of recycled plastic, weighs 13 kg, and carries a dynamic load of 2,500 kg and 500 kg in the high bays. They are moved to a high bay warehouse by employees, forklifts and AGVs.

The switch to plastic pallets has brought about sustained improvement in logistical processes and quality assurance. "The most important thing is that we can now load the shipping pallet directly onto the hygiene-sensitive production line and no longer have to pick our products twice. This has lightened the operating budget so much that the plastic pallets quickly paid for themselves."

www.falkenhahn.eu
www.cabka.com