

The trend towards bigger capacities

The machines produced by the Tromp Group in the Netherlands, part of the Markel Food Group, include pizza plants for the whole world. Sales Director **Henk Hoppenbrouwers** is regarded as an industry insider. In this interview, the expert explains how the pizza market is developing.

+ Borchfeld: Mr. Hoppenbrouwers, what trends do you see in the pizza market?

+ Hoppenbrouwers: Each country and every region has its own preferences. Tastes differ greatly. We in the Netherlands like a rather sweet pizza with pineapple or vegetables. The Chinese, on the other hand, prefer pizza with lots of cheese, some sauce and a lot of poultry meat. As I said, every country has its own individual flavor preferences.

+ Borchfeld: You just mentioned China. Is it a market for pizza?

+ Hoppenbrouwers: Asia's pizza market is still small, but it is growing, and we have already sold plants into the region. There is a difference in the product range we offer there, however, because many Asian households have no oven at all, so the consumer has no possible way of baking his pizza at home either. Pizzas are therefore 100% fully baked, then offered for sale either frozen or chilled. Customers can then reheat the pizzas, e.g. in a microwave.

+ Borchfeld: It seems to be a really specialized market.

+ Hoppenbrouwers: That's true, and the market is changing rapidly. But in the Tromp Group we support our customers to enable them to respond to market changes. We provide specialist knowledge not only on the spot but also in our Technology Centre here in the Netherlands. Together with customers, we develop baked products to suit the home market. We also help our customers with product adaptation and development.

+ Borchfeld: So are there any general trends in the pizza market?

+ Hoppenbrouwers: To begin with, Europe's frozen pizza market has an annual growth rate of 8 to 10%. I observe a trend towards smaller pizzas and pizza snacks at the same time. There is a growing market in North America for fresh and chilled pizzas, for example those sold in supermarkets. We have also installed a plant to manufacture gluten-free pizza. Here again we observe a trend. On the other hand, a different shape is something that doesn't seem to go down too well with consumers. Rectangular pizzas, for example, are not very popular with customers. 90% of consumers think of a pizza as having a round shape. A general trend is the "De-Luxe Pizza", richly topped with various kinds of cheese and meat.

+ Borchfeld: What do pizza producers want from the mechanical engineers?

+ Hoppenbrouwers: Pizza manufacturing plants are becoming bigger and wider, and thus more efficient. For example,



++ Sales Director Henk Hoppenbrouwers

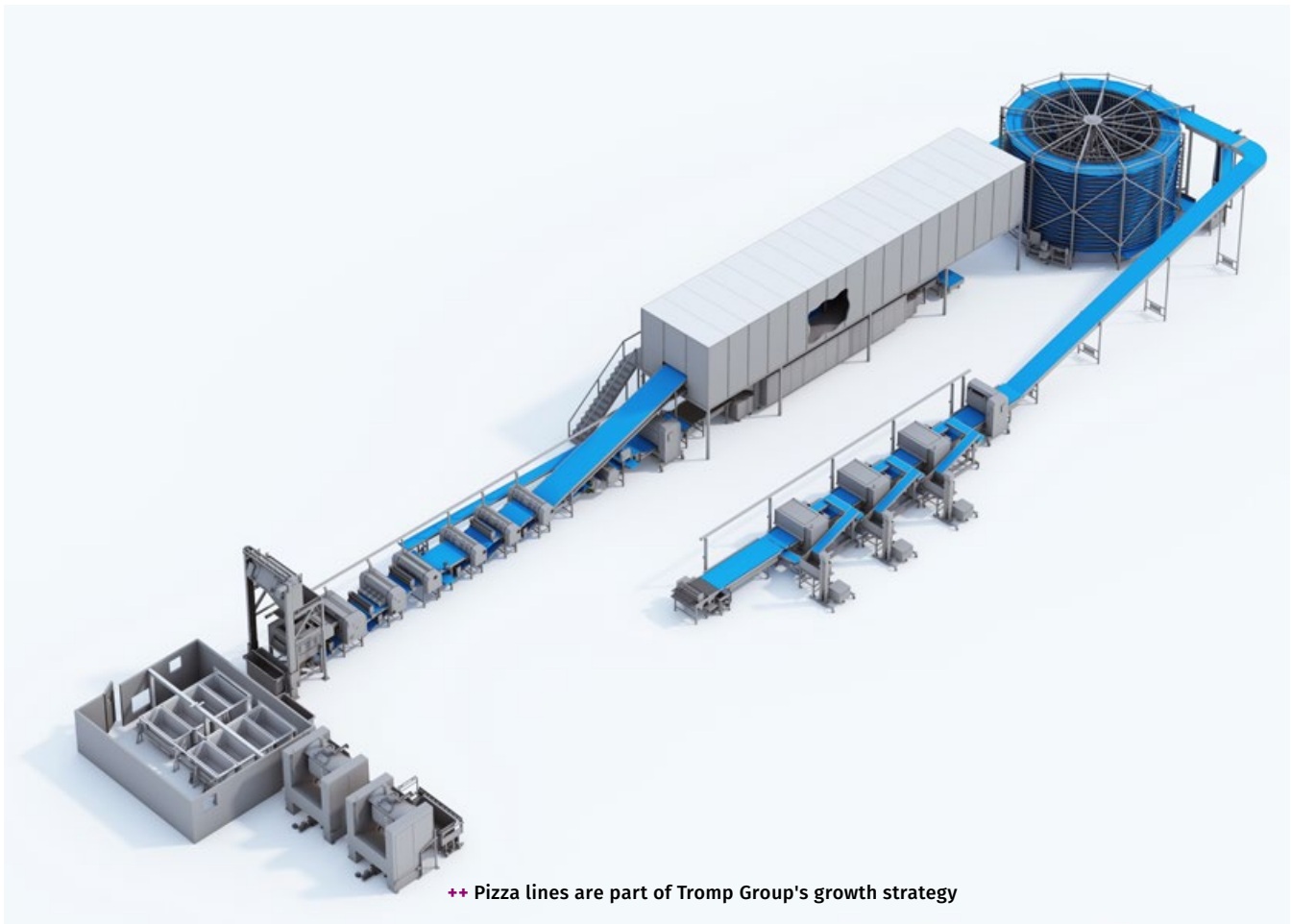
we have installed output capacities of up to 12,000 pizzas/hour. What I observe is an annual increase in hourly output capacity. The majority of customers also want complete turnkey plants with good control and monitoring. These plants should allow a quick product change and should also be easy to clean. That's why we offer the corresponding interchangeable modules, e.g. strewers, that can be wet-cleaned. Robots can also be used, e.g. to distribute tomato sauce onto pizza crusts with pin-point accuracy. Customers also want to be able to produce a variety of baked goods on a single line, to avoid plant downtimes and to make them more flexible. There is a general increase in what clients require from mechanical engineers.

+ Borchfeld: The Tromp Group manufactures a wide variety of plants e.g. laminating lines, pie and cake lines as well as wafer plants. How important to you are pizza production lines?

+ Hoppenbrouwers: Pizza lines are clearly part of Tromp Group's growth strategy. Tromp Group earns around 30% of its revenues from pizza production plants, and demand is high. We also profit through synergies within the Group. For example, we can offer continuous mixers from our sister company Reading Bakery Systems in the USA. There is also a transfer of know-how. From our pie-making plants we know about the pressing process to manufacture pizza crusts. At the same time, however, we can also offer our customers a process to punch pizza crusts from a dough sheet.

+ Borchfeld: In terms of the end product, do the various processes yield different pizzas?

+ Hoppenbrouwers: I think it's a question of manufacturing philosophy. What we observe is that the press process is more likely to be used by premium suppliers, since pressing dough to form a pizza crust takes time because the dough ball needs



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to be pressed at least twice to achieve the required shape and stability. On the other hand, punching the pizza crust from a dough sheet is quicker. Only a single operation is needed. However, it creates a corresponding amount of scrap dough that has to be recycled back into the process. I don't imagine that the end customer will be able to detect any big difference in the finished product. Perhaps in the bite. As I said, we offer our customers both processes.

+ Borchfeld: One more quick look at the iba. What can visitors to the trade fair expect?

+ Hoppenbrouwers: In Munich we will present, among other things, innovations in the pizza and healthy snacks segments.

+ Borchfeld: Mr. Hoppenbrouwers, many thanks for the interview. +++

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