



Enjoying the visit: From top (L-R) Tuti Tan, Brigit Boudoin and Nick Lucken; Claire Williams, Gerry Falvey and Alex Vaks; Tim Han, Nick Hinton, Ian Christie; Diana Ferns, Andrew Bourne, Daren Wade and Roger Gilbert; Paul Messenger, Dave Ferns and Alex Williams; Richard Lunzer and Luke Thomas



Premier Tech's headquarters at Eersel near Eindhoven in The Netherlands

Learning the latest advance being made in bagging technology

A group of milling professionals tour a Premier Tech manufacturing facility in Belgium: Here's what they saw

by Roger Gilbert, Publisher, Milling and Grain, UK

In late June 2022, Premier Tech of The Netherlands extended an invitation to UK flour millers, and members of the London and Southeast Milling Society, to visit its manufacturing facilities near Eindhoven for a two-day tour along with a visit to the installation of a packaging unit at a flour mill in Belgium.

Mr Stefan Schut, the Managing Director of Client Solutions for Premier Tech Systems and Automation's operation for Europe, Middle East and Africa, hosted the visit along with his Management and Sales Assistant Brigit Baudoin and Sales Manager Luke Thomas.

Milling and Grain was privileged to be invited, and to learn not only about the most recent developments in packaging, but also about the history of Premier Tech, its equipment and the future of packaging and palletising.

Going from strength to strength

As Mr Schut pointed out to attendees, 2022 is the penultimate year in Premier Tech's soon-to-be-celebrated 100 years of business in 2023. Worldwide, the company is going from strength to strength and achieved an 11.5 percent growth in turnover to break the CAD \$1 billion mark in 2022 over 2021.

Supporting the company's global achievements are the different brands that now form the backbone of Premier Tech and have served the milling industry over many decades.

Mr Schut also highlighted Premier Tech's vision to "Feed, Protect and Improve our World."

That being said, packaging for the flour and feed



Bringing the work of the two factories together, plus locally-produced components, impressed the group of UK millers





Premier Tech's engineering plant at Hapert, also located near Eindhoven in The Netherlands



milling industries is only one area of focus within the Premier Tech Systems and Automations business group. Further, Systems and Automation is one of five other business groups that make up the company, a Canadian-based business that includes Growers and Consumers, Water and Environment, Digital, and Life Sciences.

Within Premier Tech Systems and Automation, Mr Schut specified that Premier Tech provides net weigh scales, baggers, palletisers and stretch wrappers for automated packaging lines that can handle a whole range of seeds and crops. Premier Tech also provides packaging solutions for flour, feed, meats, dairy foods, fruits and vegetables and other products including spices, barley malt, rice, pastas, cookies, and bakery mixes, to names a few. They also direct some of their company focus to organics, chemicals and minerals. Their expertise seems endless.

Gaining insight

Naturally, the 25-strong group was interested to gain insight into the manufacturing of bagging equipment for the flour milling industry, and how the equipment they may use in the future is designed and assembled. They were also eager to

Mr Stefan Schut, Managing Director of Client Solutions for Premier Tech Systems and Automation outlines the history of the company



UK flour millers from the London and Southeast Milling Society pass a word of thanks to Premier Tech and the team, which hosted a farewell lunch

The group of UK flour millers enjoy the atmosphere and banter during the introductory talk at Premier Tech's headquarters in The Netherlands





Seeing the automated bagging equipment in operation was mesmerizing, as a special feature of this system is the bottom filling of bags to avoid dust emission and improve throughput. The complete system is automated all the way through to palletising and shrink wrapping at the Paniflower Mill, Brabomills at Westkaai, Antwerp in Belgium



Deliveries of wheat and dispatches of flour are a continuous routine in this traditional mill in the Paniflower Mill, Brabomills at Westkaai, Antwerp in Belgium



see for themselves the kinds of innovation offered through digital solutions that will make packaging more reliable and efficient in future mills.

A walk through the assembly facility at the Eersel headquarters near Eindhoven allowed the group to see the best in production line operations and provided an opportunity to explore each area of the assembly process. The following day, the group visited the company's second factory at Hapert, where much of the engineering work is carried out.

Alongside the latest in packaging equipment and technology, the group also had a chance to witness how Premier Tech actively refurbishes older machines, including a 30-year-old Chronos Richardson machine which will be returned to service in a flour mill and hopefully continue operating for another 30 years.

Providing reliable service

A brief discussion emerged around the sustainability of refurbishing older equipment that cannot support newer "smart" technologies versus modern "smart" machines that are potentially more productive and energy efficient in the long run.

It must be said that the flour milling industry has a reputation of maintaining equipment well so that it can provide reliable service, often 24/7, without requiring replacement. However, the industry will eventually have to address questions of new technology as the pressure on production prices increases and competition encourages the uptake of newer, smarter and more efficient machinery.

On the second day, the group was also invited to visit the flour milling company of Paniflower, Brabomills at Westkaai near Antwerp, Belgium and on the river Merkseburg, to view the installation of Premier Tech's latest packaging machine, a project which involved retrofitting into an older mill building.

This project showcased a twin-bagging unit that can process a range of bag sizes and has the unique function of filling bags from the bottom up, eliminating dust and ensuring smooth and fast filling.