



Bowmans refocuses for future growth

UK-based Jas Bowman & Sons Limited is withdrawing from the milling market to concentrate on its highly successful ingredients business.

The move will enable the family business to consolidate its 160 year heritage, and to build on its global presence in the food ingredients market. Bowmans will focus its energy, innovation and future investment in this area.

With a heritage in milling dating back to 1857, Bowmans diversified successfully into the ingredients market in the early 1990s. The business counts major blue chip food processors amongst its customer portfolio. Bowmans has ingredients operations in South Africa, Australia and Thailand as well as the UK.

To support the growth of its ingredients business, Bowmans made a significant investment in a blending plant in Hertfordshire, UK in 2012. This pioneered standards of consistency and product traceability in order to deliver the brand protection required by major customers. In July 2016 it will open Europe's first dedicated production site for gluten-free coatings. This investment reflects the company's leading role in meeting the fast-growing demand for specialised 'free-from' production.

The blending plant at Bowmans in Hitchin, Hertfordshire, UK

As part of this programme of innovation and rationalisation Bowmans is implementing a plan to move away from flour milling. This move reflects the continued consolidation within the milling sector. Future supplies of high-specification flour will be guaranteed through a new supply chain with strict criteria and quality control. This approach is already used successfully by Bowmans in its international operations, and the change will be seamless and invisible to the customer.

Whitworth Bros Ltd Flour Millers will purchase and continue to run Bowmans' Whitley Bridge flour heat treatment plant. The Whitley Bridge flour mill will be contracted to mill for Whitworths Bros. Ltd. until late 2016, at which point it will cease production.

Milling operations at Bowmans' site in Ickleford in Hertfordshire will cease in September 2016, though the company's Head Office, R&D centre and ingredients manufacturing facility will continue to operate from the site.

Some staff will be affected by the moves and the management team is working with them and their representatives to minimise the impact of the changes.

Rory Bowman, Chief Executive of Bowman Ingredients comments: "This is a positive move for the company, its customers, suppliers and staff; and will further strengthen our position in the global market.

"Bowmans has a great track record of sector-leading innovation. We led the move to heat-treated flour, which re-invented the food coatings market and has enabled the company to grow a significant coatings business. The move out of milling enables us to concentrate on those areas that we predict will account for considerable business growth."

Looking towards the future, Mr Bowman comments: "There are already 21 million allergy sufferers in the UK. One in 100 people are diagnosed with coeliac disease and more are gluten intolerant. With cases of food allergy continuing to rise, the pressure is on food producers to secure legitimately 'free-from' production.

"Our new gluten-free plant in Bedford delivers a quality of product that can only be achieved in a fully gluten-free environment. It is clear that the ability to produce free-from products is going to deliver considerable commercial advantage in coming years – and Bowmans' structural changes free us to lead the response to these trends."