

Despite the current global market downturn, Vietnamese firm Toan Thang Plastics is looking ahead to future plans for expanding the manufacturing infrastructure at its Long An factory beyond its woven bag making business, following the encouraging returns from its first venture into PP multifilament yarn extrusion. Keith Boi reports

Encouraging returns

Tran Thi Hang, business director of Toan Thang (www.toanhangplas.com), remains generally optimistic about the growth prospects for the company first founded in 2002, one that has quickly grown into being among Vietnam's largest agricultural bag manufacturers.

Over 200 woven bag converting, finishing and printing machines have been installed at the Toan Thang factory over the last five years, mainly commissioned from Chinese and Taiwanese machine suppliers.

With 85% of its present bag production capacity catering to the domestic market, Toan Thang supplies to most of the major players in Vietnam's agricultural industry and its strategic plant location in Long An province allows the firm's high volume production to serve the woven sack packaging needs of the wide range of agro products, fertiliser, refined sugar and poultry exports from the province.

With Vietnam's agricultural exports experiencing a sharp drop in demand, Toan Thang's bag making business has been affected by the global economic crisis.

Hang says the approach her company has taken to offset the fall in domestic demand is to raise its bag production volume designated for exports. Through this strategy, Toan Thang still intends to maintain its current bag production output at about eight million bags per month, even as the market is getting more challenging.

"With the tough market conditions we face, demand for our bag business is bound to be affected to an extent but we are fortunate to be able to build a strong business foundation with customers in North America and Europe, giving our export activities the much needed boost," Hang says. "This has



also shown that the bags we produce are of a proven quality, reliable enough for both domestic needs and our export markets."

Multifilament interest

Another strategy Toan Thang has pursued is to diversify its product line, installing a South Korean-made PP multifilament yarn extrusion line that is integrated with Motan conveying and blending equipment (Metro 2HBS 250/1 hopper loaders for conveying, Gravicolor blending system) for highly precise materials handling. The firm sees multifilament applications as offering attractive growth opportunities to complement its bag making operations, as well as giving them a technological expertise that is not yet widespread in Vietnam.

And once the economy starts to show signs

of picking up in the next year, Toan Thang plans to invest in at least four more PP multifilament lines of higher capacity, says Hang. A significant advantage to the PP multifilament line Toan Thang has installed is the Motan materials

handling engineered for the manufacturing operations. The automated conveying system ensures reliability in the operations and helps reduce the workload, while the gravimetric blending system plays a crucial role in maintaining a uniform colour consistency throughout the extrusion process.

Hang further touches on the end product colour performance facilitated by Motan's technology: "There is a considerable amount of colour changeover for our multifilament product line. The



Tran Thi Hang, business director of Toan Thang, has installed sophisticated Motan materials handling system on the firm's new PP multifilament extrusion line

colour consistency is of utmost importance because the masterbatch usage needs to be factored in, and this is a substantial portion of our material cost."

According to Hang, the Motan blending system has been able to allow Toan Thang to keep their level of masterbatch consumption at a consistent 2-3%.