

# IMAFORNI TODAY

THE NEWSLETTER OF IMAFORNI INT'L

Year 5, issue 1, December 2007, quarterly • Editor: Imaforni Int'l, via Stra', 158 - 37030 Colognola ai Colli (Verona) Italy, tel +39/045/6174711, e-mail info.ima@imaforni.it, www.imaforni.com  
Publication Manager: Patrizia Adami • Graphic Design: Clab Comunicazione, e-mail info@clabcomunicazione.it • Court Authorization, Verona R S n. 1556 - Sept. 1 - 2003 • Postal subscription  
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Interview with Gerard Langver - Central Engineering Project Manager at Verkade

## A career in biscuit production engineering

Gerard Langver: Central Engineering Project Manager at Verkade – the historic name for “Sultana” and “Cafè Noir”.

it is of paramount importance to keep myself fully up to date on the latest technical developments of all potential vendors. I also keep a close eye on the latest information about the market trends of final products. This part of my job means I work in close cooperation with our Marketing Department. All these aspects of my work mean I travel quite extensively, as I report directly to the top management of UB international.”

### What is the size of your production facility?

“At Zaandam we have a total of 12 production lines and we have always invested heavily in automation in order to maintain the highest levels of production efficiency and consistency in quality. This has clearly proved to

with Imaforni’s engineers about the specifications of the equipment for the forming and baking process, and final detailed technical documents were then drawn up and mutually agreed upon. I recall that at the time we were pleased we’d found a partner who would listen to us and work to meet our requirements. The whole project was executed very well.”

### How has the market evolved since then?

“Since that time the market has shown constant growth and, in 2006, further investment in the “Sultana” production line became a must. Imaforni responded to our challenge in a very positive way, presenting us with their innovative technical solutions. The key to this exercise was to install a complete

gradually melted away once we started up the line; in a very short period of time the line was performing just as Imaforni’s engineers had promised! We were aware of Imaforni’s reputation in the market about starting up their lines very quickly, and we were extremely pleased to get first-hand experience of this!”

### Could you tell us a little more about the nature of the supply?

“Baking is an important step in the process. A hybrid oven consisting of radiating and convection heating proved to be the right choice: we noticed a marked improvement in the overall quality of our final products, and the extended width of the production line did not represent an obstacle; on the contrary, uniformity across the width was perfect.”

“The line was installed on the second floor of our existing building,” adds Mr. Langver, “where the distance from ground to ceiling is short, and it had to be inserted between two existing lines, whose down time had to be kept to an absolute minimum. We were forced to strip down one of the walls of the building and erect an external lifting platform in order to afford the easiest possible access of the equipment to the installation site. Imaforni, for their part, delivered the oven in pre-assembled modules, and this hugely contributed to keeping the project within the short time schedule. We set aside just one weekend to introduce the entire oven into the installation site, while the following weekend we spent inserting the forming equipment into the same building.”

### What was the time allocated for the execution of the project?

“The whole project, from initial shipping through to the first box of “Sultana” ready for sale, was completed in 7 weeks! We were in production at the end of the first week of “wet” commissioning. I’d like to take this opportunity to congratulate our partner’s project management and

their installation & commissioning engineers, as they performed an excellent and highly professional job in extremely difficult circumstances. Good planning, the “work together” approach adopted by our two teams, and the generally positive attitude of the people involved in the whole project, were key factors behind its success. All the forming equipment was supplied by Imaforni, including the “sultana sprinkler” which, as everybody in the sector knows, is one of the most critical pieces of machinery in “Garibaldi” production. My comment is that we entrusted the entire forming and baking process to Imaforni for the second time in just a few years, and that – as we expected – they did a great job on both occasions.”

“The whole project, from initial shipping through to the first box of “Sultana” ready for sale, was completed in 7 weeks!”

Verkade is a historic name in the biscuit and chocolate-making sectors in Holland. “Sultana”, one of their most famous brands, has made the Group a household name in Europe. “Cafè Noir” is another unique cookie, consisting of a sheeted biscuit glazed with coffee icing, a milestone in the sector of enriched cookies and immensely popular in northern Europe. Verkade is also well known and appreciated by consumers for its wide range of chocolate-based products in the confectionery sector, where it enjoys a dominant position. Since 1990, the company has



been part of United Biscuits (which also owns McVitie’s in the UK, and BN in France). Verkade’s operations unit is located in Zaandam and consists of a vast, fully automated, 4-level production factory.

Today Mr. Gerard Langver is the Central Engineering Project Manager but he actually joined Verkade some 30 years ago. His long experience in the engineering sector will help give us a better idea of his Group policies and illustrate the latest developments in process engineering applications.

### Can you start by telling us about your position within the Group?

“I’ve spent my entire career in Verkade and in the cookie and confectionery sectors. My task is to manage the strategic trends of capital investments for my Group, starting with the drafting of feasibility plans that take into consideration all the technical, process and business issues involved in each project. In my position

be the right way to maintain our successful growth in a competitive market. Our main brand “Sultana” – or “Garibaldi” for the experts – is based on a process which has so many unique features that we need to handle any engineering investment it involves with the greatest care. In 1995, when we start thinking about replacing one of the existing “Sultana” lines, we realised that the selection of the right

“Hybrid oven has improved the quality of our “Sultana” cookie”

partner for the job would be one of the most critical decisions of the entire project. We had in-depth discussions

line in limited space, between two existing process lines, whose production could not be stopped! To make things even more difficult, the job had to be completed within a very short time frame. We needed higher product rates, so we accepted all the assurances Imaforni’s technicians gave us about working on a 1.36-metre-wide line. This was something we’d never done before, and it was the widest width we could afford in the available space. All our understandable concerns about the quality of baking, weight control and consistency across the width,

## Imaforni is committed to a campaign in favour of childhood

Social responsibility can be considered an obligation for a successful company: a kindergarten is built up in Guinea Bissau thanks to volunteers’ aid.



For many years now, Imaforni has been committed to supporting social initiatives around the world. One of its latest was set up in Guinea Bissau in association with the Franciscan Friars of Italy, local missionaries and volunteers. The country is one of the

poorest in the world, with a population estimated to be in the range of 1.2 million. Approximately 43% of the inhabitants are less than 15 years of age. Infant mortality is around 14.3%, while the illiteracy rate is as high as 80%. Many Italian Catholic associations are already

actively working in the territory to improve the living conditions of the poorest.

There are three main pillars of human dignity: proper food every day, health support and education. Imaforni has chosen to concretely support the construction of a nursery school in the village of Cumura, where Italian missionary work has been going on for many years and where a hospital has already been built.

From 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., the building can take up to 150 pupils ranging from 3 to 5 years of age. Many of the children will need to walk long distances, even kilometres, to get to the school, but this initiative will ensure that they get a proper meal every day.

The main targets of the project are:

- To remove the children from the streets; it is customary in these African cultures to leave them unattended from dawn to dusk;
- To give them basic education in order to prepare them for primary school;
- To ensure a complete meal each day (rice with meat

or fish), which is something more extraordinary than usual for them;

- To teach them games and the basic notions of hygiene.

The school will be managed by Suor Rosanna Nava and will employ 7 teachers and 4 assistants. Around 30,000 meals will be distributed each year. Imaforni’s ownership is committed to closely monitoring the success of this initiative.



Above left: view of the building of the kindergarten under construction.

## TECHNOLOGIES

### Rotary Moulder, not just a restyling but a substantial upgrading

A really “easy to use” & “tool free” unit which is applicant to plot a trend in the sector.

The process of giving a shape to soft dough by using a mould seems to have been established since the creation of the first cookie. Apparently all the machines developed by all vendors throughout these years look all the same – a few little differences here and there, but the principle of operation is the same to all. This is true up to a point! Also the wheel, which was invented ages ago, has gone through a natural evolutionary process in terms of manufacturing cycles, applications etc. Imaforni looked at the rotary moulding process not for the sake of reinventing the wheel, but with the aim of updating many minor aspects of the machine in order to improve its overall performance and to make it more user-friendly and simpler to operate. The latest version contains several interesting features: the frame now consists of a single piece of folded steel plate. The entire structure is lighter but guarantees the same rigidity as the traditional one, which consisted of two thick and heavy metal frames. This also makes it possible, upon request, to construct the frame entirely out of stainless steel. In accordance with Imaforni’s “tool-free” design philosophy,

all the ordinary maintenance operations on the machine, including the most serious ones, can be carried out with bare hands! During production change-over, for example, the mould can be quickly unlatched and raised from its position without the need of tools. Now there’s no danger of forgetting a tool on the belt and finding it baked at the oven exit – if all goes well!! The same applies when the conveyor belt needs to be replaced: the operator can easily remove the mould, the rubber roll, the final nosepiece and all the supporting rolls without using tools. The whole operation takes no more than 40 minutes. Easy access to the knife, means it can be cleaned or replaced in a very short period of time.

All these operations can be carried out directly by the production operator without needing to involve the maintenance crew, obtaining consequent savings in terms of time and specialized personnel resources, which helps reduce the overall running costs of the unit

compared with traditional rotary moulders. The new design matches the new style of Imaforni’s latest equipment: all the motors are directly coupled to the gears and greater space underneath the machine provides full and easy access for cleaning purposes: your factory operators will have no excuses!! Many other minor features of the machine have been reviewed but all together they have brought significant overall improvement to the performance of the machine in terms of reducing “tailing”, as well as weight and dimension control to the dough pieces. The hopper

design has been upgraded in order to ensure an ideal flow of dough to the moulding roll. All the mechanical components of the unit are housed outside the frame of the machine. This solution, which is in line with company design philosophy, ensures perfect sanitation and easy cleaning of the machinery, while facilitating access for inspection and servicing. Control of the machine can be customized to suit the baker’s needs: the basic level of control includes manual hand wheels for adjusting the knife and the distance between the various rolls,

while all speeds are adjustable from the touch screen. A basic recipe-storage system keeps a memory of just the set speeds of the unit. On the next level up, the control system can be fully servo-motorized and all adjustments to the machine can be made through the operator interface touch screen, with a full recipe storage system. The range of products to be formed can be expanded by adding auxiliary devices to the unit: egg-wash or ink printer, sugar or other powder sprinklers can be used to decorate the top surface of the dough pieces, making your final products even more appealing and unique. The equipment has external covers made of transparent material to permit visual inspection for cleaning or servicing. Stainless steel covers can be supplied upon request. The restyled rotary moulder equipped with 260 mm diameter rolls, can be supplied with working widths from 1000 up to 1700 mm. A further landmark has been added to the process of rotary moulded cookie manufacture!



## ON SHOW

### MODERN BAKERY 2007 in Moscow

A geographical area which shows a very promising growth rate.



From 15 to 18 October 2007 Imaforni was present at one of the most important events in the bakery market. Russia, and neighbouring countries in particular, are geographical areas which have shown a consistent rate of economic growth, and where Imaforni has already collected a series of prestigious references and is committed to even greater expansion. Our Sales Area Manager Mr. Riccardo Zusi, was at the booth together with the staff of ANTON OHLERT GmbH & Co., where he met visitors in order to discuss their projects and update them about our most recent innovations.

Feel free to send any opinion to: [marketing@imaforni.it](mailto:marketing@imaforni.it)