

# HF tracks energy-saving tire and small-lot trends

Tire market trends are driving technology and business strategy, machine manufacturer's executive tells **Shahrzad Pourriahi**

**A**utomotive sector demand for energy-saving tires is likely to have a significant impact on the tire machinery sector over next few years, according to Joern Seevers, director of HF Curing Press. The trend, he said, is linked to current developments among car manufacturers, for whom energy-saving technologies are now a major focus.

"The weight of the tire needs to be as low as possible, which means the pre-materials are getting thinner with tighter tolerances. This has an impact on the accuracy of the manufacturing process and makes tire handling more and more sensitive," Seevers explained.

This will increase reliance on hydraulic curing presses, which said the HF expert, are "the optimal solutions to ensure a repeatable accuracy over the life time of the press combined with a high output to keep the process cost under control."

## Smaller batches

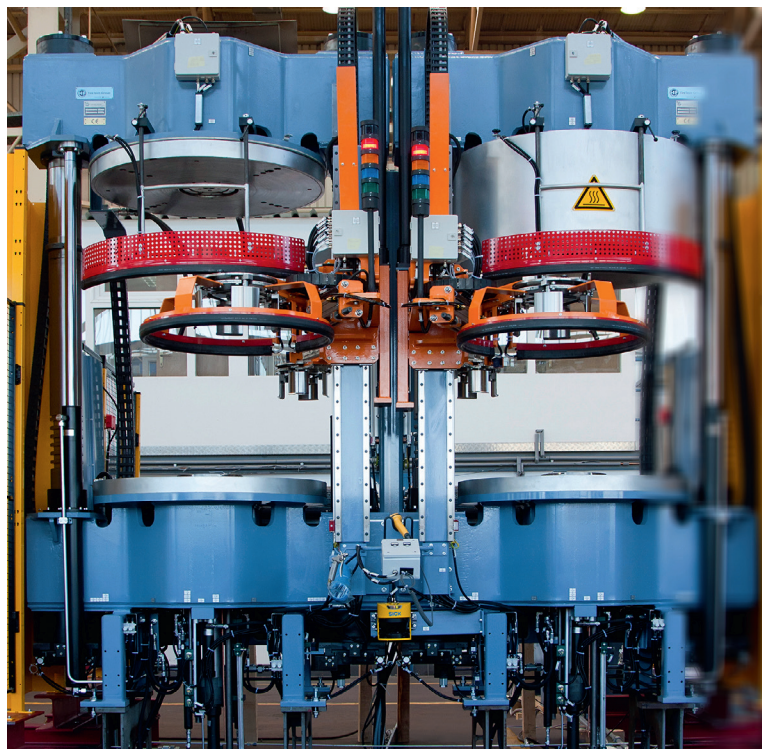
Another important trend is the move among tire makers to produce smaller lot sizes, Seevers noting that this will require more moulds and more frequent mould changes.

"Independent controlled cavities of the curing presses are the current standard to support this trend," said Seevers.

"Our quick mould-change devices [can enable tire manufacturers] to decrease the mould-change time to less than 30 minutes. This gives the customer the flexibility for smaller lot sizes without a significant production loss," said the HF official stating that the devices were in operation at the sites of some of HF customers.

On the business front, Seevers highlighted the importance of global-reach for HF, which produces curing presses at a plant in Croatia and delivers worldwide.

"Our customers are investing worldwide, in a lot of countries



Repeatable accuracy is an increasing requirement in the tire market

following the car manufacturers and we can deliver to their needs. More than 80 percent of our deliveries are outside Europe.

"We are studying the potential need to further expand the production and to strengthen our engineering department in Hamburg in order to fulfil the expected customer demands."

## Destinations

The main destinations are "the well-known" growth markets in east and southeast Asia and the Americas, the director said. HF, he added, has also received orders for PCR curing presses from Chinese and other tire manufacturers that invest in China.

In 2014, the HF group announced a partnership with Qiangdo Doublestar to produce truck tire presses in China. "The truck tire curing press partnership with Qingdao Doublestar in China is a step in this direction: to feed

the Chinese market demand and serve the Chinese customers better," said the HF director.

Seevers went on to explain that the change from mechanical to hydraulic curing presses was ongoing for truck tire presses, adding that this was a focus for the partnership with Qingdao Doublestar.

Joern Seevers started his career as a process engineer at Continental: taking on a leadership role in new manufacturing processes in 2003. In 2010, he moved to become general manager of Giti Tire's equipment centre in Shanghai, guiding machinery and investments for all tire plants. Since January 2014, he has been responsible for the curing press division at HF and MD of its production plant in Belisce, Croatia.

