

## PRESS ARTICLE

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### **Gebo Cermex's WB46 wrap-around case packer rises to Unilever's skin cream challenges**



**Unilever's Dubai site is the largest personal care factory in the Middle East and Africa, producing hair and skincare products. There, Gebo Cermex has recently supplied a complete end-of-line solution, including one piece of the company's spearhead equipment, the WB46 wrap-around case packer, a smart "Industry 4.0" system designed for greater flexibility, hygiene, and ergonomics.**

**This project posed a unique challenge: Unilever's pots of skin cream are round and thus did not in themselves provide the counter-pressure required to attain the usual perfect sealing result, an issue which was amplified by the use of trays with short flaps. So something extra was needed. Thanks to specific adaptations and improvements and a close partnership between Unilever Dubai and the Gebo Cermex team, this obstacle was neatly overcome and the end-of-line solution now covers all of Unilever's specifications.**

#### **Tailored solution to overcome primary and secondary packaging challenges**

Gebo Cermex recently implemented two comprehensive ends-of-line for shaped plastic bottles at Unilever's site in Dubai. Thanks to this large installation, the global player in the consumer goods market is using state-of-the-art technology that, combined with a modular design, ensures faster, shorter, and highly responsive production lines, cutting lead-time to market. To handle this ambitious customer's requirements, the entire set of Gebo Cermex competences was needed, from robotic product collation to shrink-wrapping and palletising, thus contributing to establish a successful partnership between the two companies.

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The Dubai plant also has a third, more “traditional” packaging line featuring packers and shrink wrappers, installed over the same period as the two robotic lines and designed for premium pots of skin cream. Among the 17 packers and shrink-wrappers running on site, this line is equipped with one of Gebo Cermex’s flagship pieces of equipment, the WB46 wrap-around case packer.

At the end-of-line stage, skin cream pots are first collected and packed into trays before the whole package is shrink-wrapped. As a transportation unit, these tray-and-film packs are then stacked and loaded into American cases.

One of the main challenges of this project was the sealing of trays with short flaps. In addition, the round-shaped skin care products did not intrinsically offer the necessary counter-pressure for a perfect sealing operation.

Didier Saussereau, Packing Product Manager at Gebo Cermex, explains: “As you can imagine, it is even more challenging when speeds of up to 25 trays per minute are reached. This is why the sealing station was equipped with specific adaptations and pressing plates to guarantee a perfectly squared sealing of the trays, while protecting the pots across the entire process.”

And it was a success: the WB46 packer has retained its ultra-smooth operation, guaranteeing high-quality packaging, while ensuring that Unilever’s end-of-line specifications are fully met.

This is a good example of Gebo Cermex’s renowned capability to tailor their advanced solutions according to customers’ needs. As Didier points out, “The capacity for equipment customisation is one of Gebo Cermex’s strongest assets. Our pragmatic R&D process combined with a 360° approach to end-of-line projects means we can partner with manufacturers to overcome any specific challenge. This is what we call ‘Performance through Understanding’.”

### **Highly flexible, ergonomic, and ultra-hygienic**

The fact that the WB46 wrap-around case packer has achieved a dominant market position is a further demonstration of the long-standing Gebo Cermex expertise in the wrap around blank mechanization process: the company is able to cover all market segments and all primary packaging types, whatever the technology and speed level.

Handling six different formats of pots and trays, the WB46 packer installed at Unilever’s factory in Dubai perfectly illustrates how to solve the dilemma between high flexibility and the need for ever-shorter production runs. This is no longer a challenge thanks to automatic adjustments, the presence of digital counters, and unlock/lock buttons specifically set to perform ultra-fast five-minute changeovers.

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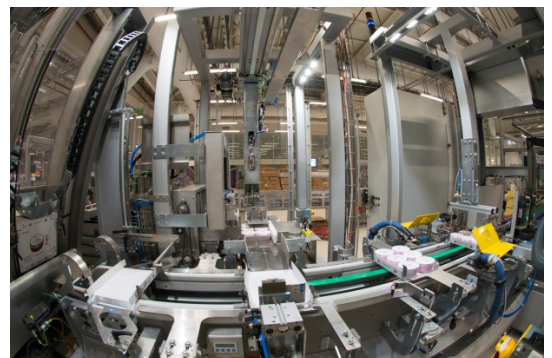
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For greater ease of operation and maintenance, the WB46 is firmly operator-centered. With the blank magazine set at a height of 850mm, loading is easy, while the equipment's large guarding doors offer optimal visibility. Additionally, the solution has been designed with a clear focus on ergonomics, allowing a much-improved accessibility to operators and maintenance staff.

Hygiene was also top of mind when developing WB46: with fewer horizontal surfaces, which reduce potential dust and fluid retention zones, the machine features FDA-approved thermoplastic timing belts, which also cut maintenance costs.

### Managing today's demands, while welcoming future needs

Jean-Philippe Beduneau, Gebo Cermex's Strategic Key Account Director for Unilever, is keen to stress that the success of the WB46 at Unilever's site in Dubai is a logical step within the company's philosophy of developing solutions that enable the Factory of the Future: "With accounts such as Unilever, we are obviously setting our sights firmly on Industry 4.0, and in this respect the WB46 is a benchmark. It comes with a user-friendly, multi-touch PC panel, based on a tablet-approach navigation; it features an RFID login, user and data management, alarm and statistic reports, plus remote connectivity and standard operating procedures with its 'One Point Lesson' database. In addition, we can integrate robotic modules for product collation and loading in the WB46 packer, thus raising the bar even further in terms of product protection and flexibility. These are only a handful of features that demonstrate how the solution massively contributes to accelerate, facilitate, and improve operability and maintainability." As minimising operational expenditure is typically key for manufacturers, Gebo Cermex has also enriched the WB46 with a new automation platform with electronic synchronisation which will, in the words of Jean-Philippe, "significantly cut down Total Cost of Ownership, as it will guarantee 30% electricity savings".



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### About Gebo Cermex

Gebo Cermex works in partnership with Sidel as part of The Sidel Group. The Sidel Group is formed by the union of two strong brands, Sidel and Gebo Cermex. Together, we are a leading provider of equipment and services for packaging liquid, food, home and personal care products in PET, can, glass and other materials.

With over 37,000 machines installed in more than 190 countries, we have nearly 170 years of proven experience, with a strong focus on advanced systems, line engineering and innovation. Our 5,000+ employees worldwide are passionate about providing complete solutions that fulfil customer needs and boost the **performance** of their lines, products and businesses.

Delivering this level of performance requires that we continuously **understand** our customers' challenges and commit to meeting their unique goals. We do this through dialogue, and by understanding the needs of their markets, production and value chains. We complement this by applying our strong technical knowledge and smart data analytics to support maximum lifetime productivity to its full potential.

We call it **Performance through Understanding**.

Find out more at [www.gebocermex.com](http://www.gebocermex.com) and connect with us



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