

First Look: Robertet's New Fragrance Compounding Facility

Increased automation boosts productivity and output

“We are confident in the future of Robertet and this industry,” says Christophe Maubert, president of Robertet Inc.’s fragrance division, as he discusses the opening of the company’s new fragrance compounding facility in Plan-de-Grasse, France.

As for why the company built the site in a developed country during a period of relative economic turmoil, he adds, “We still believe that we have potential organic growth in the developed markets. Of course we believe in the emerging markets, but we believe we can increase our market share by winning positions in developed markets.”

The 12,000-square-meter facility represents a €27 million investment for the company, which will unite the production, logistics and quality control operations of Charabot and Robertet without eliminating any of the 140 affected employees.

The new operations will produce 4,000–6,000 tons of fragrance annually and will conduct 1.5 million weighing acts per year, 90% of which will be automated. These activities will be backed by a fully automated transport and storage system. The automated lifting and movement of raw materials by robots, in addition to constant air extraction systems, aim to improve worker conditions. The combined benefits are estimated to increase productivity by 50%.

“We have a robot that will manage powders in small quantities,” says Francis Thibaudeau, deputy manager fragrance division at Robertet. “In the old factory we had some small weighings that were covered by a robot; in this new factory we have 90% [covered]. We have three different robots depending on the size of the mixes we have to produce. We have, for the big tanks, a new system to mix powders in big quantities, which we have designed for cosmetic manufacturers. At the end we can produce 90% of our compounds with 90% automation.”

The exceptions to automation, says Thibaudeau, include heavy crystals and hard incense. He adds that the facility opening is nearly complete. As of press time, the old Robertet compounding facility is expected to close by mid March.

Echoing Maubert’s confidence in the company and the fragrance industry at large, Robertet will reinvest in its US operations by making facility improvements at a newly purchased site in New Jersey.

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