

ISMR SAYS:

"Saronni will celebrate its 70th anniversary in 2020"

ACCENT ON COIL

Italian coil processing specialist, Saronni Srl, has re-designed its new family of high-precision straighteners and levellers to feature 'self-learning' functionality.



Roberto Crespi, Saronni's sales and marketing director, next to the new R10 straightener on the booth at Blechexpo

"Our new family of high-precision straighteners and levellers, developed for high-strength and thin material, has been very successful in the automotive and electric motor fields"

With more than 4,000 press feeding lines set up all over the world, hundreds of active customers, exports to 20 countries and 5% of its turnover invested in research and innovation, Saronni has placed its focus firmly on innovation.

In business since 1950, it produces press-feeding, cut-to-length lines and embossing lines (including punching, cutting and stacking). It has installed around 4000 press feeding lines worldwide and serves hundreds of customers. Its products include coil handling equipment; compact feeding lines; traditional feeding lines (with loop); cut-to-length lines; embossing lines; coil-to-coil lines; straighteners; levellers; combi-straighteners and levellers with automatic straightening roll cassette-change; high-speed servo-feeders; zig zag servo feeders; coil welding units and more.

Based at Borgo Ticino (Italy), a few kilometres from Malpensa International Airport in Milan, the company will celebrate 70 years in business in 2020. Its factory at Borgo Ticino is a true eco-plant, producing all its electrical energy needs through solar panel installations. **ISMR** spoke with Roberto Crespi, Saronni's sales and marketing director, at Blechexpo to discover its latest innovations....

ISMR: Please outline any recent successes and achievements?

RC: Our new family of high-precision straighteners and levellers, developed for high-strength and thin material, has been very successful in the automotive and electric motor fields. We started this development four years ago and decided to re-design the machines to meet the evolving needs of our customers.

The new design includes several improvements such as automatic head opening for easy roll cleaning and maintenance, automatic roll cassette-change and automatic straightening adjustment (ASA). ASA functionality means that the machine can 'self-learn' straightening parameters (the operator just has to input strip dimension and strip yield strength). We used a large team of software engineers to develop the software in-house. The line can process maximum strip widths of 600mm and thicknesses from 0.2 to 1mm. Speed is up to 80 mt/min.

Last year, we launched a new Coil Weight Calculator web app, so that customers can calculate the weight of a coil. We also launched our high-precision straighteners (Model R10) for thin high-strength materials

and a new family of high-precision straighteners for medium strength/thickness materials with interchangeable cassette rolls. A new family of 'smart' 6-high levellers for material thicknesses ranging from 0.2 to 6mm was also introduced to the market.

ISMR: What are your views on the current global business climate for sheet metal professionals?

RC: The year has been a bit strange – it started very slowly for the first six months. The first month, particularly, was difficult because all projects were frozen. In July, the situation started to pick up and in September, the market really took off (particularly in the U.S.) and is currently very good for us.

Even here at Blechexpo, we have been concluding negotiations on orders and decisions are being made. We expect this pattern to continue to the end of the year, with sign-offs on orders.

For next year, we believe the situation is fluid. The first eight months will be spent fulfilling our order book. Hybrid and fully electric cars are having a very strong impact on the market right now. Technology is changing; carmakers are stopping or reducing certain

"Hybrid and fully electric cars are having a very strong impact on the market right now"

production lines and starting new products with new technologies.

ISMR: What are you promoting at Blechexpo in Stuttgart?

RC: We brought one straightener from the new family for magnetic strip (e.g. for electric motors for the automotive industry) to Blechexpo. This is the smallest straightener we produce and reflects the increasing number of small electric motors present in today's car. Ten years ago, there were three or four electric motors in a car but today, it is 50-60 motors. The automotive sector is a key market for us.

ISMR: Please explain your strategic and technical objectives?

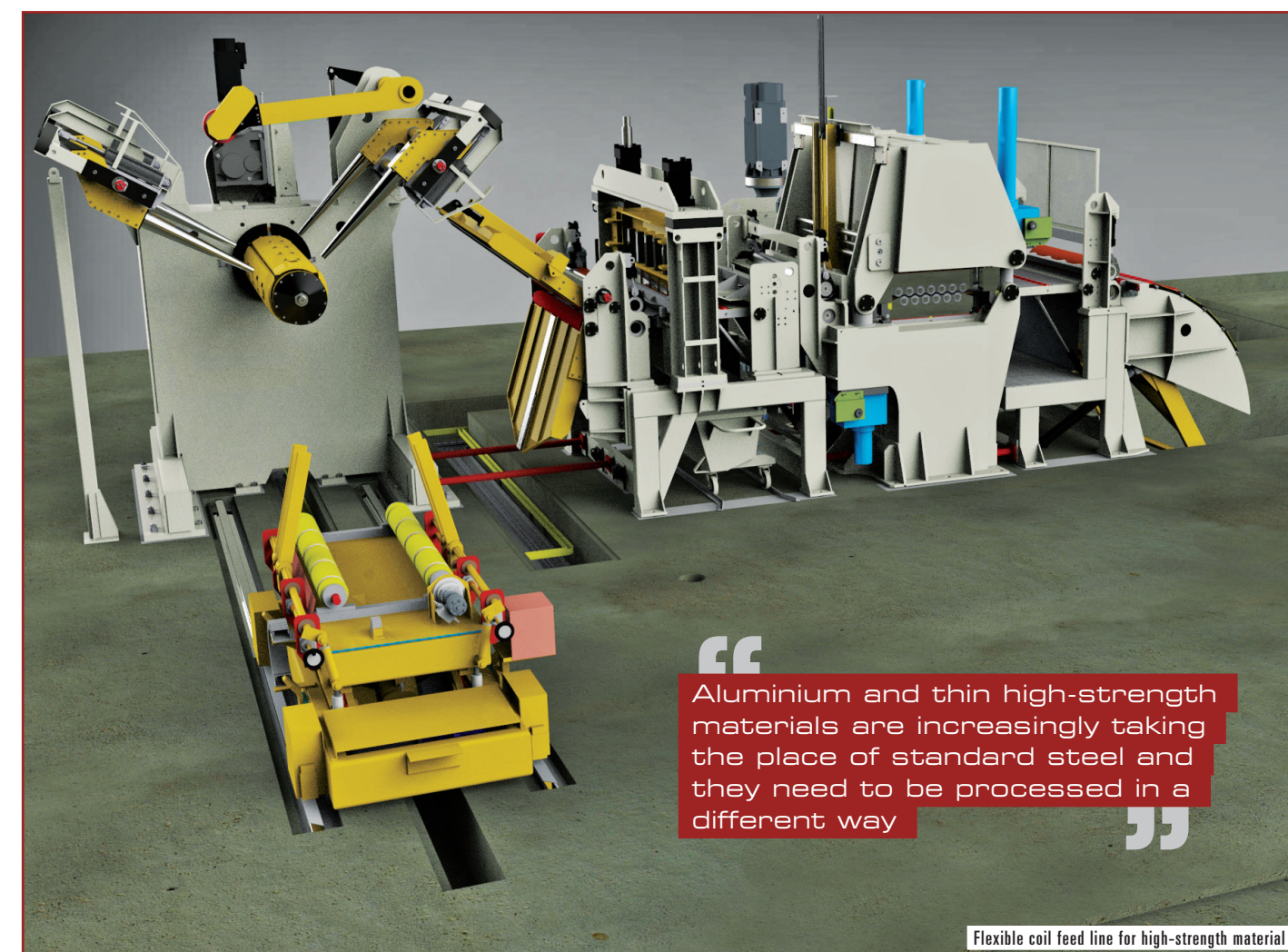
RC: It is very important for us to understand the direction that car manufacturers will take in the future so that we can be ready with the right new technical solutions for their new products.

We have also embraced the adoption of Industry 4.0 principles into our product design – this has partly been spurred by Italy's tax incentive laws. We offer remote diagnosis on machines for troubleshooting software issues in real-time and have developed self-learning software to simplify machine operation and increase productivity.

ISMR: Which issues are of prime importance for your customers at the moment and how are you addressing these issues for them?

RC: The majority of our customers are automotive and household appliance OEMs and Tier 1-2-3 companies. In general, customers look more at turnkey solutions and very flexible systems. They expect a full service from their suppliers. In view of the seismic change (towards electric cars) in the automotive industry, they need the right customised solutions for their new products.

Safety and flexibility are of strong importance for our customers. Our machines comply with CE safety standards, but we also pay particular attention to operator safety in every phase of coil change and machine set-up, using the latest PLC, servo motor, detector and safety system technologies in our lines and working cycles.



"Aluminium and thin high-strength materials are increasingly taking the place of standard steel and they need to be processed in a different way"

Flexible coil feed line for high-strength material

FACE TO FACE

Saronni can provide a full service from preliminary engineering and project management to on-site after-sales service and is strongly committed to developing high-level solutions for its customers to process new products from new materials (aluminium alloys, high-strength steel etc.).

ISMR: What is your strategic focus/vision over the next few years?

RC: I believe that need to focus our strategy on forging a better presence in the market with customised solutions and understand, as early as possible, the key market trends. One of the regions in which I would like to increase our presence is Scandinavia, particularly Sweden and Finland. We have customers and have already installed equipment in this region, but I believe that there is more development potential in this market.

We also wish to increase our presence in Germany by finding more agents. Finding good agents, however, is not easy as the older generation is now retiring.

ISMR: Which trends do you see developing in sheet metal/coil feeding markets?

RC: Aluminium and thin high-strength materials are increasingly taking the place of standard steel and they need to be processed in a different way (i.e. dedicated levellers, high-precision

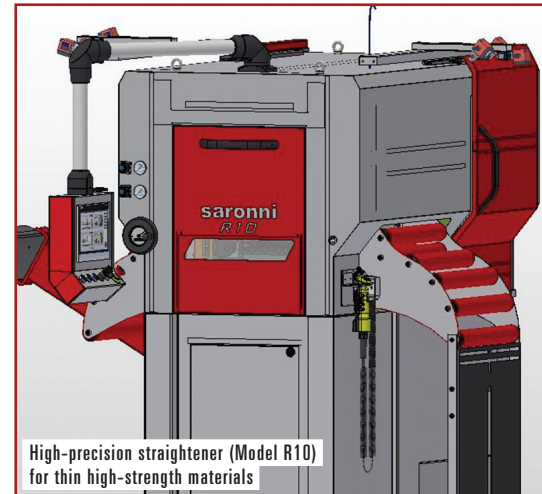
straighteners and other special arrangements). We have customers that are using copper, which is easy to form (does not need special machinery). Some of our customers are using titanium but it is not as common.

The drive in the automotive market has been to decrease the weight of vehicles. You can do this in two ways: either go all-aluminium or decrease the thickness/increase the strength of the material. I am seeing more thinner, high-strength material being used for structures in cars. Aluminium can, for example, be used in car doors. Our customers are moving in both directions so our machines are adjusted accordingly to process these materials. Our levellers are high-precision straighteners – one part is the straightening cassette to straighten steel (up to 1500 newtons per square mm).

Our family of straighteners with interchangeable straightening cassette rolls enable our customers to extend their range of processable strip thicknesses, on the same line, just by changing cassette rolls (e.g. strip thicknesses from 0.2 to 12mm).

ISMR: Where do you see the greatest challenges and opportunities?

RC: Working mainly across the automotive sector, we believe that Europe and the USA will remain the main markets for us. Even when the final destination of our lines is the Far East or Central America, the contracts for



High-precision straightener (Model R10) for thin high-strength materials

these are still being discussed in Europe or the USA. Eastern European countries are also growing rapidly.

I no longer believe that joint venture agreements are the way forward. In our industry, you must be free to work with every press manufacturer without restrictions.

ISMR: Thank you for your time. ■

CONTACT

For further details, see
www.saronni.com