



POLYMERS IN THE UK MARKET

Stephen Harpham, business manager, talks about the business of Plasfilms, one of the leaders in the UK polymer and packaging film market and a SIBUR partner.

Tell us a few words about your business. What do you sell?



A British branch of Plastrubution, a film distribution company, and a subsidiary of Itochu Corporation, a Japanese general trading group headquartered in Tokyo and a Top 500 company globally (120 offices in 63 countries). Plastrubution is a leading British company in polymer sales, with a primary focus on raw materials for thermoplastic injection moulding, extrusion moulding and blow forming. Plasfilms was established in 2010 to sell polymers and packaging films in the British market and is steadily growing with an average rate of 20% annually.

We supply films to British companies that often keep low inventories and need small volumes and quick delivery. The Company has been operating since 2010 and over time has become an essential link between British business customers and foreign manufacturers of films and base sheets for them.

We have developed close cooperation with a number of companies, in particular SIBUR, represented by BIAXPLEN, is our key partner since 2016.

Do you sell all types of films? Which of them are the most popular in the UK?

The key product our business is a standard film. Once we have ensured uninterrupted supply of standard films, we can offer special films too. A film that provides businesses with a competitive edge, helps cut down on expenses, weight, or permeability and improve productivity is always popular.

Does the British market currently have any attractive innovative solutions that may affect the competitiveness of consumers?

Recently, an eco-friendly film has been gaining in popularity, however, customers often opt for other options because it is quite pricey. Interesting products are films with low sealing temperatures, ecofilms, films improving shelf life, and barrier coated films.

The demand for downgauged and cut rolls is also going up. Obviously, if our suppliers develop promising innovative solutions, we help them promote those in the market.

What market segment do you focus on?

Most of our films end up in the food industry, however, we also work with a number of other sectors, such as office supplies and household goods, flowers, and pharmaceuticals.



An eco-friendly film has been gaining in popularity in the UK.

What is your market share in the UK?

It is difficult to say what our total market share is as we work with a large number of different materials, e.g. CPP, OPP, PET, heat shrink films, zippers, etc., and our market share varies depending on the product.

Tell us a bit about your short-term growth strategy.

Our short-term growth strategy focuses on ongoing expansion in the British market using inventory management and sales strategies. At the same time, we have recently hired a team of sales professionals to explore new markets and maintain growth.

How is your company organised? Where is your head office and where are production facilities located? How many employees do you have?

Plasfilms' head office that coordinates all operating activities is based in Ashby-de-la-Zouch (Leicestershire, UK). The Company runs seven separate warehouses located in a way that ensures maximum customer reach. Plasfilms has 12 employees, while the combined headcount of Plastribution and Plasfilms is 70 people.



Plasfilms at KBB Exhibition 2016.

How did your cooperation with SIBUR start? Are you satisfied with your relations?

We were looking for a BOPP supplier in 2015–2016, and around the same time BIAXPLEN was exploring opportunities to step up its BOPP sales in the British market through a successful financially solid company with an impressive track record. Both BIAXPLEN and SIBUR have ambitious growth strategies, and our cooperation in the British market over the last two years has been very successful. Today, we are also negotiating the terms of cooperation with Itochu in countries where BIAXPLEN does not have strong presence or local support yet. So hopefully our cooperation will expand beyond the UK.