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Food manufacturer adds ABB drive to the mix

ABB drive and control package helps Baxters Food Group to increase production capabilities at its Colchester site.

Baxters Food Group is using an ABB variable speed drive (VSD) to help ensure consistent mixing of its range of sauces, dressing and marinades. The drive is used to adjust the mixer motor's speed based on requirements for a particular product.

Installed on a 750 kg capacity holding vessel, the VSD is used to mix sauces and other products at an elevated temperature – a process known as hot fill. This process pasteurises the product, preventing spoilage and prolonging shelf life.

Baxters Food Group produces a wide range of soups, sauces, condiments, dressings, preserves, pies and meal accompaniments in the UK and Poland. Previously, it had only produced cold fill products at its Colchester site, but wanted to expand production by manufacturing hot fill sauces and marinades.

The tank, which had not been used for several years, was re-located to Colchester from one of the other manufacturing sites in the group. It featured a steam-heated jacket that made it suitable for the hot fill process, but had no controls or electrical supply. Baxters needed a power and control solution that would turn the vessel into a fully usable asset and contacted ABB authorised value provider, Gibbons Engineering Group, for advice.

"The holding vessel is vital to the production of our hot fill sauces. Without its agitation and heating capability, we would struggle to meet the required levels of product consistency and thermal process. This would potentially compromise the high-quality standards of the product range," says Tony Bellian, European Technical Director for Baxters.

Gibbons designed, built and installed a stainless steel-enclosed control panel, which incorporates a 4 kilowatt ABB micro drive to control the speed of the holding vessel's agitator via a door mounted potentiometer. The VSD enables the speed of the mixer to be adjusted from 30 to 80 rpm, ensuring the hot fill sauces are agitated at a consistently controlled speed to give the correct end product quality.

The control panel also controls the temperature of the steam. This is adjusted to suit different product recipes.

The project involved fitting associated cabling, along with setting up and testing the panel. The control panel took four weeks to fabricate and a day to install on site.

"We had a tight deadline of two months to produce, install and test the solution. Gibbons was ready to conform to all of the working requirements associated with a food production environment. In addition, they were very cost competitive." Bellian adds.

ABB (ABBN: SIX Swiss Ex) is a pioneering technology leader in power grids, electrification products, industrial automation and robotics and motion, serving customers in utilities, industry and transport & infrastructure globally. Continuing a

history of innovation spanning more than 130 years, ABB today is writing the future of industrial digitalization with two clear value propositions: bringing electricity from any power plant to any plug and automating industries from natural resources to finished products. As title partner in ABB Formula E, the fully electric international FIA motorsport class, ABB is pushing the boundaries of e-mobility to contribute to a sustainable future. ABB operates in more than 100 countries with about 147,000 employees. www.abb.com



Caption: Baxters is using an ABB variable speed drive to achieve consistent end product quality for its range of sauces and marinades.

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