



Customer Days at Kronen GmbH

'Largest number of international visitors to us so far this year'

With 110 customers and 70 representatives from 34 countries, Kronen GmbH celebrated its successes and long-standing partnerships at the Customer Days. "This year we are also celebrating the 25th anniversary of our company. With around 180 visitors, we were able to invite the largest number of international visitors to us so far this year," says Stefan Zillgith, who is responsible for the company management together with his father and founder Rudolf Hans Zillgith, Eric Lefebvre and Johannes Günther. Kronen GmbH is best known for its fruit and vegetable cutting machines.



The four managing directors of Kronen GmbH (from left to right): Rudolf Hans Zillgith, Johannes Günther, Stephan Zillgith and Eric Lefebvre.

The world as a guest in Kehl

"The special thing about the Customer Days is that visitors get to see our product portfolio, which is also demonstrated directly. That's the big advantage compared to trade fairs, where you only have a limited area available. Since both customers and our representatives from the respective countries are present at the Customer Days, we can communicate with our customers in their respective languages. In addition, for more in-depth questions and concerns, our sales managers and technical staff are there to help them."

With products such as lettuce, vegetables, and also fruit, the fresh-cut area represents the most important segment for Kronen GmbH. "Fresh-cut, ready-to-eat fruit salads in particular are becoming more popular, but there is also more demand for vegan products, which are easy to process anyway."



The latest GEWA 4000B PLUS washing line attracted visitors.



Two years ago, the company received a large order from the UK. "This involved an enormous amount of work, although it has brought us a giant step forward, especially with regard to the production of large systems and large lines. The machines were already more or less waiting in the pipeline. Nevertheless, the order did give us a headache. After all, especially with new developments that are shipped directly to the customer, there is always a need for rework. Despite everything, however, it worked out well," says the managing director.



The new equipment includes the KUJ HC dicer. "Our evaluated dicing machine KUJ has been limited to a cutting width of 85 mm. However, demand is tending more and more towards larger cutting dimensions. Therefore, we have developed the KUJ HC, which was presented for the first time at this year's Fruit Logistica. It has a cutting width of 220 mm, which makes it possible to process whole cabbages, among other things."

Strategic partnerships

At the Customer Days, the various system partners were also presented via a small exhibition as well as various presentations. "We work together with sterilAir in the area of VC disinfection, Citrosol is again a research partner of ours. We have an important strategic partnership with GKS Packaging from the Netherlands. Customers are increasingly asking for solutions from a single source, which this packaging machine from GKS Packaging can provide. Together with their system, raw products can be prepared, washed, cut, spin-dried and packaged in smaller containers for food retailers or in large packages for commercial kitchens, as required, all in one machine."



sterilAir



Citrosol



Ehedg

Not (yet) a universal machine for fruit

While there are already suitable solutions for vegetables, development for fruit is not yet as advanced, he said. "Fruits are very diverse and come in very different fruit sizes and shapes. So far, no universal machine has been established that can peel all types of fruit, for example. However, with increasing automation and robotics, there will certainly be opportunities." For example, he said, Kronen GmbH is working on robotic technology for a UK company that can process avocados. "The pit of the avocados is both removed by hand and the flesh is still scooped out manually. We have developed a robotic solution for this together with the German Institute of Food Technologies ("Deutsches Institut für Lebensmitteltechnik", DIL). However, there are still difficulties in gripping the avocados, as they do not yet have the flexibility of human hands in handling avocados."



Numerous visitors from all over the world

In-house production

When Zillgith started at the company 20 years ago, they still had the production of sheet metal parts made externally. "About five years ago, we acquired our own weighing machines. The sheet metal parts are still laser cut by external production companies, but we do the weighing, welding and milling at the Achern site, which we took over three years ago. Of course, we still buy in many individual electronic parts. During the pandemic, there were shortages of raw materials due to the delayed supply chains, which in turn led to various difficulties. However, the situation is largely returning to normal."

3,000th machine presented in Australia

"Our GS 10 universal slicer offers various options: from slicing to grating to dicing. This year we also presented the 3,000th machine in Australia," says Zillgith. "Usually, every company has a cash cow, but it has a certain life cycle, after which the machine gives up the ghost. So far, no such problems have been observed with the GS 10. It is also easy to operate, inexpensive and robust. It is mainly used to cut salads. Our customers range from the Freiburg Student Union to customers in Vietnam who use the machine to dice mangoes. We have already sold 20 machines to Vietnam. There are hardly any products that can't be processed by our machines." In addition to Germany, major customers include France, UK and the Netherlands.

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Publication date: Wed 4 Oct 2023

