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German President Horst Köhler opens Europe's most modern production plant for infusion solutions

Melsungen. Today, German President Horst Köhler officially opened Europe's most modern IV solution production facility together with Dr. h. c. Ludwig Georg Braun, Chairman of the B. Braun Melsungen AG Managing Board. Here, a total of 1 million containers filled with IV solutions will be produced every day for Europe's healthcare markets. The €150 million investment was made possible by a job security agreement between the employees and corporate management.

Before an audience of 450 invited guests, Dr. h. c. Ludwig Georg Braun expressed his immense delight at this joint achievement and his gratitude towards those who made it possible: "The new IV solution manufacturing facility is not only supported by the company and its employees, but above all by the next family generation. These are two pillars on which we have always been able to lean." He also stressed the importance of having a united team behind the largest investment in the company's history.

Dr. h. c. Ludwig Georg Braun thanked everyone who helped to complete the new IV solution plant within the space of three years, from the idea to the final implementation.

Automation for top quality, safety and reliability

In the new manufacturing facility, 150 employees work on three production lines to produce an annual total of 220 million IV solution containers with 48 different IV solutions – fully automated, on a surface area which is the size of four soccer fields. From bottling and sterilization to packaging, all processes, machines and systems are connected by means of an electronic network. Project manager Dr. Frank Hähner explains one of the outstanding features of the new production facility: "Customer orders entered in the computer are sent directly to the machine, and thus have a direct impact on production planning". The core of the new production facility is the "bottle pack machine", in which

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the IV solution bottles are blown, filled and sealed in a single process. “The machine works in a rotary motion, which means that output can almost be tripled”, says Dr. Hähner. The automation not only ensures particularly high output but also increases safety and reliability in the production of IV solutions. Dr. Hähner emphasizes: “In the new production facility, we manufacture IV solutions of the highest quality, thereby setting new technological standards within our sector”. Quality assurance in the new plant is also automated. The individual production steps are recorded seamlessly by means of an electronic manufacturing documentation which takes place parallel to the production process. In this way, it is possible to save 300,000 sheets of paper. This responsible attitude towards environmental protection is reflected in the integrated energy concepts for the new IV solution plant. “The production of IV solutions requires huge amounts of energy. Through integrated energy concepts – such as the use of waste heat – it is possible to save 450,000 liters of fuel oil, 900 tons of carbon dioxide and 30% of our former fresh water consumption per annum”, says Dr. Hähner.

Job security through joint efforts

The significance of the new IV solution manufacturing facility and the commitment of the corporate management and employees is demonstrated by the job security agreement, which also led to the decision to build the new facility at the Melsungen site. The contents of the job security agreement: all 4,600 employees in Melsungen provide 520 hours of unpaid overtime over a five-year period. This quota can be used flexibly by the company, meaning that it does not lead to an increase in weekly working hours. “Together with the corporate management, we have also agreed that the overtime will largely be used for further training and development”, explains Works Council Chairman Peter Hohmann. In return, the employees’ jobs are guaranteed until 2009 and employees are entitled to a share in profits at the end of the contract period. However, Peter Hohmann also sees the agreement as having a sustainable impact: “The job security agreement is an important aspect of job protection and will help to safeguard the Melsungen location not only today but also in the future.” As can be seen by the increase in the workforce at B. Braun in the last five years, the contract has already had a positive impact on the location. If the new IV solution manufacturing facility had not been established in North Hesse, this would have resulted in the loss of 750 jobs at the Melsungen site in the medium term.

Higher production capacity for a bestseller

Over 600 million IV solutions are used in Europe every year. One in three of these is an Ecoflac plus. The high demand for these B. Braun IV solution containers was what prompted the construction of the new production facility. “Ecoflac plus is so popular among our customers because it combines the advantages of an IV bag with that of a bottle – it is stable, transparent and easy to handle”, explains Dr. Meinrad Lugan, Chairman of the Hospital Care division. In addition, it increases reliability and user safety when adding

medication and empties without air inflow – an additional safety benefit in today's hectic clinical environment.

This high demand in turn required greater production capacity. For this reason, B. Braun decided to build the new production facility which not only would provide increased capacity but also allows process optimization – with the help of the company's own experience, but also with know-how from other sectors such as the automotive and food industries. The objective is now to tap new markets, particularly in Eastern Europe. "The new IV solution manufacturing facility is convincing proof that, through a combination of the most modern production technology and the personal commitment of the employees and their company, it is possible to manufacture products of the highest quality, safety and reliability in Germany today. And at competitive prices", summarizes Dr. Meinrad Lugan.

B. Braun continues its investment

A technical center, the so-called *Technikum*, is planned for the immediate vicinity of the new IV solution plant by 2006. B. Braun will be investing a further €10 million in this research and development center for pharmaceuticals with a view to defending and developing its position in the pharmaceutical market. The technical center will be located right next to the new IV solution manufacturing facility and will share some of its infrastructure. "The technical center will offer support to the small-scale production of new pharmaceuticals. This development work not only secures the future of pharmaceuticals at B. Braun, but also the Melsungen location as a research and development center", says Dr. Meinrad Lugan.

Further information is available from:

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