



# Kraft Foods “The Milka Way”

Featuring print and apply systems  
Traceability of chocolate ■■■



“The Markem-Imaje 2000 Series print and apply systems meet all the demands we place on them. They work reliably and are easy to operate.”

## Uwe Ruf, Productivity Development Manager

**Name:** Kraft Foods Deutschland GmbH, a subsidiary of Kraft International

**Location:** Lörrach, Germany

**Founded:** 1880

**Business:** production of milk chocolate bars

**Brand:** Milka (introduced in 1901 by Suchard)

**Annual production:** 30 million cases per year

## A demanding application ■■■

Everybody knows the famous purple cow, symbol of Kraft Foods’ best-selling chocolate brand. Each year, millions of Milka products leave the Lörrach plant in southern Germany, where demand has driven a complete refurbishment of the packing lines. When the Kraft Foods team developed a new packaging concept involving re-sealable packs and shelf-ready display cases, a new labeling solution had to be found to keep pace with increased production and ensure that each traded unit case is accurately identified through the supply chain.

With higher levels of automation - resulting in much faster line speeds – Kraft Foods recognized the importance of case labeling reliability in minimizing downtime throughout its three-shift manufacturing operation. They were looking for near 100% coding system availability, with a labeling capacity of up to 60 cases per minute.

Individual packing stations feed the line, which is able to process up to four production batches. This means that products for different customers, even different

countries, needed to be simultaneously labeled in the correct format and sequence. And to make matters even more complicated, the solution had to fit within very limited space, just 800 mm, available alongside the conveyor belt.

Each 70 x 110 mm wide label incorporates both plain text and barcoded information with an EAN 128 barcode containing expiry date, batch code and manufacturing order details. This data being a vital link between the production process and the customer consignment, Kraft Foods insisted on grade A readability for the barcodes.



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## An ingenious solution ■ ■ ■

To meet these requirements, Markem-Imaje developed a solution based on the automated 2000 Series print and apply systems. For each line, two units are linked in 'tandem' mode. Working together, they can meet all production peaks. When one system needs to be replenished with a new roll of labels or print ribbon, the other unit automatically takes over the operation for the short time needed for changeover (90 seconds).

The space limitations were addressed by the design of a special stand for each system. A swivelling arm enables the operator to swing the system clear of the line for replenishment, while the second unit takes over the labeling duties. A spring mechanism ensures that

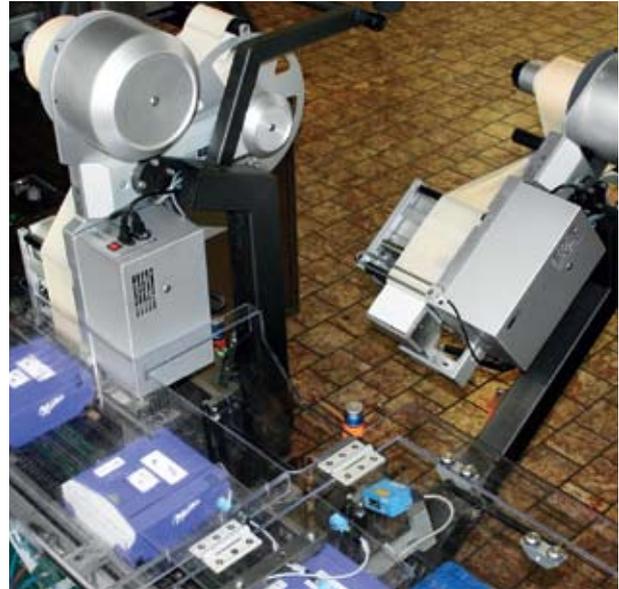
**Kraft Foods' Lörrach plant in southern Germany chooses Markem-Imaje print and apply systems to ensure the traceability of its Milka chocolate cases.**

the 2000 Series returns precisely to its original position. Typically, the whole operation can be accomplished within three minutes.

On receipt of a 'system ready' signal from the labelling station,

products are fed into the system. The cases, their lids open, are scanned from above to identify their content, and the data is passed to the print and apply systems so that the correct label format is generated.

The cases are then closed and sealed, and a signal sent to the 2000 Series; one or both units print and apply the labels in their proper sequence. A scanner then checks each barcode to verify that the correct label has been applied. Should both printers become unavailable, the line is halted so that no unlabeled products can be shipped. Markem-Imaje has also provided the software platform to manage the information required for the labeling operation. Layouts are designed off-line and stored within



**Via a specially designed swivelling arm, one system can be swung clear of the line for replenishment, while a second unit takes over the labeling of up to 60 cases per minute.**

a template database. Production information is sourced from the works order number, the process order details and a special code providing the unique information needed for effective traceability. All this data is compiled by the software and the appropriate label created. Uwe Ruf, Productivity Development Manager at the Lörrach plant, was enthusiastic about the way Markem-Imaje responded to Kraft Foods' requirements: "The 2000 Series print and apply systems meet all the demands we place on them; they work reliably and are easy to operate. The Markem-Imaje team carried out the planning and implementation phases of this project very professionally. Technical support throughout installation and commissioning was very good – exactly what we were looking for."

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Ζύγιση  
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Νεύτων Τεχνολογίες ABEE  
Γέρακα 113, Τ.Θ. 67934  
15344 Γέρακας  
Τηλ: 210 6654544  
Fax: 210 6654545  
marketing@nefton.gr  
www.nefton.gr

9, rue Gaspard Monge  
B.P. 110  
26501 Bourg-lès-Valence Cedex - France  
Tel.: +33 (0) 4 75 75 55 00  
Fax: +33 (0) 4 75 82 98 10

150 Congress Street  
Keene, NH 03431  
United States of America  
Tel.: +1 800-258-5356  
Fax: +1 603-357-1835



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