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The beauty of preforms

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The post-Covid world brings with it a greater demand for products that were previously used relatively infrequently. Whereas hand sanitiser was perhaps bought by consumers once a year and used only on flights, now the vast majority of us expect to keep a bottle of this sanity-saving liquid with us most of the time. It's not just consumers that want a handy bottle of sanitiser; supermarkets, shops, offices and public spaces are now routinely stocked with bottles of alcohol gel, which are either regularly changed or refilled, with the heavy usage requiring sturdy products.

For plastic packaging manufacturers, diverting existing or customisable bottles and closures suitable for this newly-crucial application is a good way to respond to this trend, particularly when the manufacturers have extensive experience in food safe packaging, as this can be welcome in hygiene products. For RETAL Iberia, the Girona factory for the global RETAL group of PET preforms, films and closures producers, its fast-acting team has created a range of preforms that are ideal for hand sanitiser applications, as well as other cosmetic products.



Raquel Oller Bosch, commercial manager at RETAL Iberia, explains how the long-term expertise of the team has allowed it to quickly create a viable solution. She says, "We have extensive knowledge of creating and manufacturing PET preforms that can include rPET, and we are always looking for ways to utilise our portfolio. With the increased appreciation for hygienic packaging solutions, and the greater demand for hand sanitiser and alcohol gels, we wanted to offer a cost-effective preform that was available at a range of sizes."

The new RETAL DIN preform is available in a range of neck finishes and weights, with sizes ranging from 0.5 litres up to 1.5 litres, making it ideal for both individual use and more commercial volumes of hydroalcoholic gels. The neck weights available with the RETAL DIN preform are 23/410 (2.23g) and 28/400 (2.85g). Oller Bosch continues, "This preform is based on our very successful design for mineral water and carbonated soft drinks, but the variation comes from the different demands of hand sanitiser when compared to CSD as the product is dispensed; the cap needs to be pushed or squeezed, rather than poured or drunk directly. So we've not reinvented something. We've taken what we know inside and out and made it suitable for a new demand."

Sustainable solutions

Production capabilities for these preforms are already established at a possible 13.6 million units per month, depending on size and order requirements. RETAL Iberia has invested in state-of-the-art equipment in order to manufacture at volume and speed, offering cost-conscious solutions to brand owners and blowers across Europe. With up to 100% rPET 'not a problem', the RETAL Iberia preform range can be offered as standard or customised, with all the production facilities and equipment already up and running with experienced teams.

Oller Bosch explains how the long-term experience of RETAL Iberia's team in producing preforms at high volumes for food and beverage applications means that this value can be transposed to the hand sanitiser segment, as well as other cosmetic products. She notes, "We're used to producing huge volumes for the very cost-conscious bottled water market, so we are able to pass on that advantage to customers in the hydroalcoholic gel segment. We can cope well with high volumes!"

With the wider neck available on the preform, this PET bottle is also suitable for a range of other cosmetic and personal care applications, particularly with the push button closure option. Body lotions, face creams, shampoo and conditioner are all suited, as well as sprays when coupled with the right closure. Oller Bosch adds, "We're keen to work with independent blowers that work with smaller brands as well as serving brand owner customers. We can export anywhere in Europe and have already established strong networks in Spain, Portugal, Poland, Germany, North Africa, France and the UK. Without forecasting we can supply in three weeks and with forecasting in just two days. Offering high volume PET and rPET preforms is what we do best!"