

PRE-IMPREGNATED PAPERS

Ahlstrom-Munksjö planning further investments at the Dettingen plant

Continued growth of the construction industry and furniture expenditure, an increased focus on sustainability as well as higher demand for improved aesthetic in residential and commercial spaces, are the main factors expected to drive robust growth of finish foil products made of pre-impregnated papers in the coming years.

In the past, pre-impregnated paper has enjoyed demand growth above the average of other decor paper segments. We expect this positive growth trend for pre-impregnated papers to continue. For many years, IKEA – the leading player in the furniture industry – is using more and more finish foil surfaces, which perfectly support furniture manufacturing with no added formaldehyde. Already today we support finish foil producers, who aim to fulfill the IKEA specification IOS-MAT-0003, offering formaldehyde-free pre-impregnated paper grades.

The main market for pre-impregnated paper is Europe, where approximately 90% of all finish foils are processed (printing and lacquering), but in recent years there has also been a rapid growth in North America.

“During 2020 we set a strategic development plan for our Dettingen plant. The program bundles many different projects and initiatives that aim to further enhance our service and product quality, our manufacturing efficiency and our production capacity in pre-impregnated papers”, explains Tomas Wulkan, EVP of Ahlstrom-Munksjö Decor Solutions. “With a production capacity of 50 kt, we have sufficient capacity in Dettingen to serve the growing market demand of pre-impregnated paper in coming years, but we already now want to ensure that we can serve our customers increasing demand also in a longer term perspective”, details Dr. Matthias Krull, VP Sales & Marketing.

After the quality rebuild of PM34 in 2019, including the installation of a new headbox and a complete new approach flow system contributing to an improved sheet formation, better basis weight profile control and better cleanliness, Ahlstrom-Munksjö now schedules further investments in its pre-impregnated paper manufacturing assets. “The Dettingen plant is our global Center of Competence for pre-impregnated papers”, says Michael Schirle, VP Technology and Engineering. “Our ambition is to make PM31 the fastest and most efficient pre-impregnated paper machine in Europe and to turn PM34 into the most flexible paper machine for pre-impregnated papers, including new applications and high value added products. To realize our ambitions, we have defined an investment program that is part of the strategic investment plan for Decor Solutions that spans until 2025”, details Schirle.

With this development program Ahlstrom-Munksjö wants to increase its competitiveness and further grow its leading market position in the pre-impregnated paper segment.

“This demonstrates our believe in finished foils, made from pre-impregnated papers, to serve as an efficient and sustainable surface solution for the furniture market”, emphasizes Thomas Gehring, Managing Director of AM Dettingen.