Huhtamakiâ??s US growth plans take shape with Zellwin Farms acquisition

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Huhtamaki North America has recently taken a significant step to enhance its leadership in sustainable packaging by acquiring Zellwin Farms, a moulded fibre packaging manufacturer based in Florida. With the growing demand for eco-friendly alternatives, especially in the egg packaging sector, this acquisition highlights Huhtamakiâ??s dedication to disciplined, profitable growth and a future focused on circular materials. In an exclusive interview with NUFFODS Spectrum, Michael Hodges, Vice President of Sustainability and Communications at Huhtamaki North America, discusses the strategic reasoning behind the acquisition, how it integrates with the companyâ??s manufacturing network, and what it signifies for the future of fibre-based packaging in the United States.

What strategic factors motivated Huhtamaki's acquisition of Zellwin Farms, and how does this move fit into your long-term objectives for the moulded fibre sector?

We have a clear focus on accelerating profitable growth through all levers. Inorganic growth is an important tool for us, and we aim to do it in a disciplined manner in markets and geographies in which we are confident that we can create shareholder value. Zellwin Farms is a profitable business, in a segment where we are strong, with products and technologies we know and where we see synergy opportunities.

Could you explain how this acquisition will strengthen your manufacturing presence and supply chain capabilities in the Southeastern US?

The acquisition provides a geographically complementary footprint in egg packaging, particularly together with our factory in Hammond, Indiana, which is currently ramping up operations. It supports our aspiration to be a global leader in egg packaging, with increased capacity to meet growing demand and help grow our excellent customer relationships in the Southeastern US.

Given the increasing importance of sustainability in packaging decisions, what are Huhtamaki's plans for scaling and innovating moulded fibre solutions in North America?

Huhtamaki is investing in a disciplined manner. Due to evolving regulations in the US, there is a transition from expanded polystyrene to molded fiber packaging for eggs and other products. We carefully consider when and where to invest with our customers in mind. Our ambition is to be the first choice in sustainable packaging solutions.

Are there any immediate plans for upgrades or integration at the Zellwin Farms facility to meet Huhtamaki's operational standards or sustainability targets?

We look forward to the onboarding of our new employees and ensuring their safety, as well as making sure this integration is seamless for our new customers.

How do you foresee this acquisition influencing your existing relationships with clients in the egg industry and potentially creating new partnership opportunities?

Our ambition is to be the first choice in sustainable packaging solutions for our customers. With the evolving regulations in the US, this provides us with an opportunity to invest in the growing egg packaging market and assist these customers with more sustainable packaging. We believe this will create new partnerships and opportunities to grow with egg customers in the US.

Looking forward, does Huhtamaki have any further investment or acquisition plans in the fibre-based packaging market, either in North America or globally?

Yes, we are always evaluating opportunities for organic and inorganic growth in all of our business segments and continue to look for bolt-on acquisitions.

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