

Press release

With Piab's bag grippers, Sapho increases its pace

Winter will come, the streets need to remain ice-free. With Piab's hybrid bag gripper, Sapho was able to significantly increase their cycle times in order to be optimally prepared for the winter business for road salt.

At the company Sapho GmbH, a company of the Bilgram Chemie Group, based in Ostrach, Germany, the old bag gripper no longer provided the necessary performance. When visiting another company, they noticed a better gripping solution. The gripper was particularly convincing because no one had to monitor it directly freeing employees for other tasks. To be well prepared for the upcoming winter season, they decided to invest in a new gripper.

"The impetus was that we wanted to get more power out of the machine and wanted to pack the pallets cleaner and more dimensionally stable. The technology, the know-how and the service convinced us of Piab, after we looked at several manufacturers. With the combination of robots and grippers from Piab, we are quick at the time when it counts," explains Uwe Grundstein, Technical Director at Sapho. The regions of southern Germany, Austria and parts of France are supplied by Sapho with de-icing salt from its up to 50,000 tons of salt warehouse, which is partly filled from May to October from mines in the region.

In the course of the SAS Automation acquisition, Piab has been offering robust hybrid bag grippers since November 2017, which are designed precisely for payloads of up to 50 kilograms. Accordingly, they are excellently constructed for the handling of 10 kilograms, 25 kilograms and 50 kilograms of salt bags from Sapho.

The hybrid gripper attached to a robotic arm removes the sacks and bags from a roller belt on which they are placed after filling. It grabs the sacks from above, drives the forks on both sides between the rollers of the belt and thus picks up the bag on the underside. As a result, the bag lies on the massive gripper fingers during movement. For the Piab hybrid bag gripper to fit exactly to the existing system and in particular to the roller belt used by Sapho, the fork spacing was adapted to the spacing of the rollers. "In this way we could deploy a standard product and adapt it to customer needs with just a few changes. This has advantages for the customer in terms of delivery time and costs compared to a completely customized solution," explains Roland Singer, Team Leader Vacuum Automation & Robotic Gripping Division at Piab.

When laying down the bags, the gripper fingers open first and then the integrated cover plates. As a result, the bags are kept in shape during drop down and stacked firmly and dimensionally stable on the pallets.

Grundstein explains: "From our loose salt warehouse where we store a literal mountain of salt, we automatically fill big bags, PE sacks, bags and buckets at more than ten machines. This equals more than 800 to 1000 pallets a day. Especially the palletizing of the bags had to run with much higher cycle times than before to increase the productivity of the overall process. With the new Piab hybrid bag gripper and a minor process optimization, we can now palletise 9 bags per minute compared to 6 bags with the old system. This corresponds to up to 16 pallets more per day and thus more than half a truck load. In addition, the process now runs smoothly and without damaging the bag. "

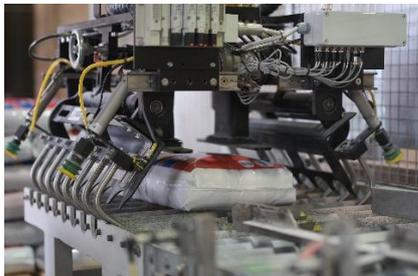
"Our employees are relieved further, too. Thanks to the automatic intermediate layer handling integrated in the gripper, palletizing of the 10-kilogram sacks eliminates the need to stoop and

manually place a cardboard liner on each pallet. This protects the back and has the advantage for us that the employee can devote himself to other tasks. It also eliminates the need to interfere with the automated process, "adds Manuel Bender, Deputy Head of Filling Solids.

"We used the summer break to retrofit the plant so that it is now ready for winter business. The installation was very simple and smooth - basically like plug and play. Thanks to the support during the installation and additional advice from Piab employees, we were able to further optimize the use of the gripper and thus take full advantage of all its possibilities, "continues Grundstein.

Piab's robust bag gripper range is ideal for palletizing plastic, fabric or paper bags containing grains, chemicals, dog food, minerals and many other products. In addition to the adjustable hybrid bag grippers, Piab also offers static bag grippers. Both types are designed for payloads of 25 and 50 kg. They eliminate the need for expensive custom tools and can usually be set up in under five minutes. They are made of safe, solid stainless-steel gripper fingers. The cover plates are used for precise and tight placement of the bags on the pallet. Both gripper types can be optionally equipped with suction cups for placing intermediate layers or pallet hooks.

Photos



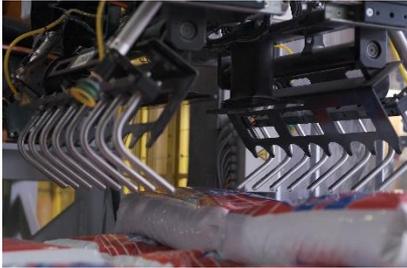
1. The bag gripper from Piab takes sacks off the roller belt. The width of the gripper was customized according to the roll spacing.



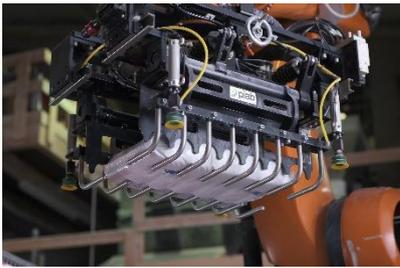
2. The bag gripper reaches the pallet.



3. During drop-down initially only the gripper fingers open.



4. After the gripping fingers open the cover plates. So the pallets are packed firmly and dimensionally stable.



5. Piab's grippers can move sacks of up to 50 kg.

About Piab

Piab provides smart solutions for the automated world, helping thousands of end users and machine producers in e-commerce logistics, food, pharma, automotive and other manufacturing industries to improve energy-efficiency, productivity and working environments. With more than 500 employees and SEK 1,2 bn in sales 2018, Piab is a global organization, serving customers in almost 70 countries from a network of subsidiaries and distributors. By leveraging the ongoing technological development in automation and robotics, and targeting high-growth segments and geographies, Piab's vision is to become the global leader in gripping and moving solutions.

About Sapho

Founded in 1971, Bilgram Chemie is today active in the wholesale of chemicals, detergents and cleaners, purifying agents, biogas plant products, heat and cooling medium, adhesives and services such as contract filling and plant construction. The headquarters of the Bilgram Group is Ostrach, Germany. The products are also distributed through our subsidiary in Frankfurt / Main, Germany and the holding company in Kirchheim unter Teck, Germany. Through a wide, dense network of cooperation partners in Europe, we are always close to our customers and offer an optimal sales network for our various business areas. With our subsidiaries and cooperation partners, we are represented almost everywhere in Germany and other European countries.

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