

## entrepreneur profile

FOTOS: PEU RICARDO/DP



**With investments of R\$ 90 million, in November 2015 Frompet commenced operations in the Suape Industrial Port Complex**



After passing through one of the 14 injectors, the machine prepares the product, molding the packaging which is then collected by a robot within an automatically calculated time frame.

# The future of Industry 4.0, as presented by Frompet

*This Suape-based firm is beginning to reap the rewards of its investments in technology*

KAUE DINIZ AND ROCHELLE DANTAS  
dpempresas@diariodepernabuco.com.br

Have you ever imagined leaving a factory, turning out the lights, and knowing that robots will carry on working without the need for a single human present? It sounds like something from a movie, but it is already happening. And it's happening in Pernambuco. Frompet, a PET packaging plant located in the Suape Industrial Port Complex, has invested heavily in automation, becoming a kind of blueprint for the so-called Industry 4.0, or the new industrial revolution, as some prefer to call the advancements brought about by developments in artificial intelligence.

In September 2016, after ValGroup President Luigi Geromini discovered the robots and the technology at an industry exhibition in Europe, after less than a year in Suape – and following the investment of R\$ 90 million in its new plant – Frompet made the decision to enter the digital age. Afterwards, six members of the Frompet staff spent ten days in Italy in

a learning exchange for qualification, training, and cultural re-adaptation to the new procedures. In February 2017, Frompet became one of the first few Brazilian companies to embrace the Industry 4.0 concept.

"For a year now our operation has been 100% automated. As far as I know, there are no plants converting virgin PET resin into PET forms in South America operating under this concept. I know of plants like this in Japan, Italy, the United Kingdom and Germany. This pioneering Frompet enables us to get closer to Industry 4.0", says Marcelo Guerra, the company's current CEO, who sold the firm to ValGroup in 2008.

The implemented system automatically determines what will be produced, after the green light from the company's commercial department. From that point on, there is no human interference; the eight robots moving around the plant do all the work, collecting,

transporting and storing the product until the customer is ready to collect it. According to Maria Botelho, Commercial and Sustainability Director, the firm has seen an efficiency gain of 80% to 90% with the implementation of the new model.

Automation provides absolute efficiency and, even more than that, eliminates errors. There is no possibility of a wrong shipment caused

by human error since the cargo is handled entirely by the system. The customer

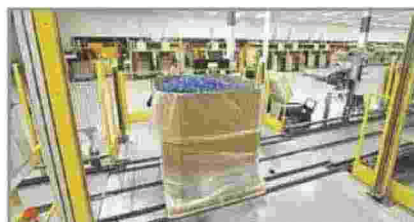
also benefits, receiving precisely what they requested, faster", highlights Guerra. Today, Frompet has 251 active customers.

Automation does not exclude the need for human labour, especially highly qualified personnel. Currently the firm has 104 employees. "People are indispensable in the process. There is double checking in the commercial area, a third check upon shipment and a fourth when the cargo is loaded on the truck, in addition to the

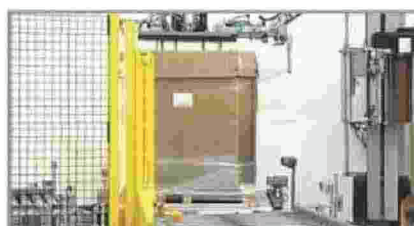
Billing stage, when the sales tax invoice is issued. Five steps for which we need committed people", stresses Guerra, highlighting this year's target for the company: obtaining ISO 22.000 certification – an international standard for all businesses in the food chain – by June. Frompet would be the first company in this sector in South America to obtain this certification.

## RECYCLING

Next to the factory, there is a shed where Frompet stores and recycles PET bottles using a fully automated system that classifies the products by colour and eliminates waste and any other kind of material. Ultimately, part of the packaging Frompet puts into the market via its customers, comes back to this area to go through the same procedure. "We are a business with perfect reverse logic. We buy back for recycling more than 10% of what we put into the market. This makes us an environmentally responsible company, and we have already received seven different recognitions of this", Maria highlights.



After being "fed", the robot deposits the product on a conveyor. The plant's nominal production capacity is 180 million PET preforms per month.



The boxes are then forwarded to the automatic labelling area and receive the last seal to be sent to the customers, which number 251 active today. In 2017 revenue increased by 8%.



After leaving the conveyor, another robot transports the boxes to the warehouse for storage prior to customer collection.

