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TOP NEWS

Humidity control solutions making the delicious difference to your food

Thursday, 03 September, 2020, 12 : 00 PM [IST]

Dinesh Gupta

The Indian F&B industry is worth over \$400 billion and the sector has been identified as one of the key focus sectors under the 'Make in India' initiative. Other than bringing up a variety of products on a daily basis for the domestic population, India is also a large exporter of processed food and related products across the world.

The industry lays a lot of focus on the quality, processing and packaging of the end-product and ensuring it meets the expectation standards of the consumers. Majority of the industry players across the world are incorporating sophisticated technologies to maintain the growth fuelled by the changing consumer tastes and lifestyle.

Now, given the diversity of ingredients used for a certain food item, its processing and following the packaging standards it is like a default process to ensure that there is no damage or harm to the food item because of any external factors. However, there is one external factor that often plays the role of a party spoiler and can be a torture for any producer of food and beverage items: The moisture in the air.

Moisture control is essential in every segment of the food industry in the spheres of storage, production, packing or processing. For instance, in areas near the sea belt, the humidity is higher and it is exasperating when salt from the salt shaker refuses to flow.

Now put the packaging and processing machinery in the same situation, sticky powders can interfere with the operation and obstruct the free and easy movement of the food stuff. Something as simple as an instant juice powder or drink mix becomes a double problem. Not only the powder mix lump refuses to flow smoothly in humid conditions, it also hinders the functioning of the packaging equipment.

Sugary products such as chocolates, hard candies, chewing gums and bubble gums are hygroscopic. When the humidity is high, these products regain moisture and become sticky and prone to mould formation. The other major problem faced by the confectionery industry is of uneven coating.

Uncontrolled humidity/moisture during the manufacturing and coating process of confectionery (chocolates, candies, sweet snacks) is responsible for change in the structure/dimension of the film core interface, grainy and irregular coating, increase in residual moisture content and improper adhesion i.e., degradation of coating quality in the presence of moisture.

Even snack foods like potato wafers, namkeens, corn chips, popcorn and noodles absorb moisture from the surrounding air during processing and

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become soggy. Presence of moisture also results in sweating in the cooling tunnel in the packaging equipment. To keep snacks crisp and fresh, dehumidification is extremely important.

During the processing of powder foods such as milk powders, spices (masalas), additives, whey powders, soup concentrates, egg powder and coffee powder the presence of moisture in the air can cause lumping and caking. This affects the free and easy movement of the food and beverage powders in the processing machine and pneumatic conveyors.

High humidity in the processing and packaging chambers can result into inconsistent product quality and production, longer drying time, rapid downtime and production loss.

Obviously, when moisture can have such a profound effect on food and/or machinery, the solution lies in dehumidifying the air. Proper dehumidification ensures optimum humidity control as required by the process and are dependable, efficient and versatile. Dehumidification allows smooth powder flow even during periods of high humidity. Desiccant-based dehumidifiers lower the moisture content of the surrounding air maintaining RH as low as 1% at a constant level regardless of the ambient conditions during the production, storage and packing to help improve the quality and retain the freshness of the processed food longer.

Food and beverage companies world over are deploying the innovative dehumidification technology that require minimal manual intervention, are highly energy-efficient, and are extremely helpful in increasing throughput by reducing cost and time. Understanding the need for the dehumidification solution and proper implementation is saving F&B players across the globe a lot of money by minimising the risk of the stock going bad even before it reaches the food table.

Over the year, Indian players in the dehumidification products and solutions industry have earned a good name for themselves by coming up with cutting edge solutions made in India for the world. They have and are successfully serving various national and international players to serve their varied dehumidification needs.

(The author is director, Bry-Air)

Recipe for Success

Bartending 'interesting accident', states aspiring mathematician Lal



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