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Sustainable surf's up, for Cobra and Sicomin

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Since 2010, Cobra International, the leader in composites for watersports equipment headquartered in Chonburi, Thailand, has manufactured more than 10,000 surf boards based on coconut fibres for leading brand NSP.

Founded in 1978, initially as an own-brand manufacturer of light-weight surf boards, in 1987 Cobra began to offer OEM production services for glass composite-based water sports equipment and by 1999 had become the leading manufacturer of surf boards, with a 50% share of the global market for brands including Starboard, Fanatic, JP Australia, Surftex and NSP.



The best-selling Cocomat boards feature a coconut fibre sandwich shell wrapping a Secure Cell EPS core which is vacuum moulded with epoxy resin and finished with a clear, fluid matt performance skin. Cocomat is both extremely light weight and strong and its construction is patented by NSP.

“Cocomat boards are an early success story stemming from Cobra's focus with its customers on sustainability, which will also see us releasing our first Sustainability Report this year to detail achievements in respect of electricity and water consumption reductions, dust control and green area improvements,” said Cobra CEO Danny Chotikapanich at JEC World in Paris. “On the product development side, we are following the Cradle to Cradle design concept of Doctor Michael Braungart, since we believe the circular economy is the only final answer to a sustainable world. Efforts are being made in all possible directions, although ultimate success is still in the far distance.”

Cobra has, however, made a significant step in the right direction this year with its new bio resin supply arrangement with long-term partner Sicomin.

Sicomin has made a substantial investment at its plant in the south of France to support the industrial supply of bio resins to allow Cobra to easily transition from traditional petrochemical-based epoxies to GreenPoxy for its production.



Sicomin's GreenPoxy products are already widely used in a variety of markets such as marine structures, leisure and winter board sports and electric vehicles. The latest addition to the range, the InfuGreen 810 infusion system, was recently awarded DNV GL certification and officially launched at JEC World 2017, where Sicomin and Cobra had neighbouring stands.

“Our InfuGreen 810 has been formulated to support manufacturers like Cobra producing parts using injection or infusion techniques and is also available in high volume, industrial quantities,” said Sicomin president Philippe Marcovich. “As an advanced resin system with very low viscosity at room temperature it has approximately 38% carbon content derived from plant-based origins. It is available with a variety of hardeners and is suitable for small to very large components, including extremely thick laminates.”

“Sicomin has been integral in our on-going shift to bio products and there have been no compromises in mechanical performance and a minimal difference in cost,” added Chotikapanich.

Cobra has grown over the years to become an organisation employing 3,000 people with an extremely wide range of composite manufacturing, tooling and finishing technologies. Since 2006 it has also been successfully supplying a wide range of products to leading automotive OEMs in Germany, Italy, Japan and the UK, based on its 'Strong, Light and Beautiful' core water sports concept, via subsidiary company, Cobra Advance Composites (CAC).



Last year, the company opened a new best-in-class paint facility for automotive finishing and in the first half of 2017 has made a major upgrade to its EPS plant and also established a CNC centre housing over 20 machines. Its most recent installation has been a high-pressure RTM (resin injection moulding) production line for large volume, short cycle structural composite parts.

“Our 'one-stop-shop' philosophy allows us to offer customers the most complete range of products and services right from design and development through to the final composite parts,” Chotikapanich concluded. “We will continue our efforts to develop products that are as environmentally friendly as possible, using natural resources in a sustainable manner.”

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