

► Dear reader,

With this second edition of our newsletter, we would like to keep you informed of the latest developments at Proferro. In recent months, we have invested heavily in the further expansion of our mechanical finishing department, with the emphasis on automation and robotization. The spearheads of the new investment program are the two new five-axis machining centers. In this newsletter, we will also present to you one of our customers - CLAAS Tractor SAS. With our HWS-molding line, we supply nodular cast iron parts for the CLAAS Axion 900 tractors, which are assembled in Le Mans (France). To conclude, we will look back at the 75th anniversary of the Picanol Group and of our foundry.

We hope that you will enjoy reading this newsletter.

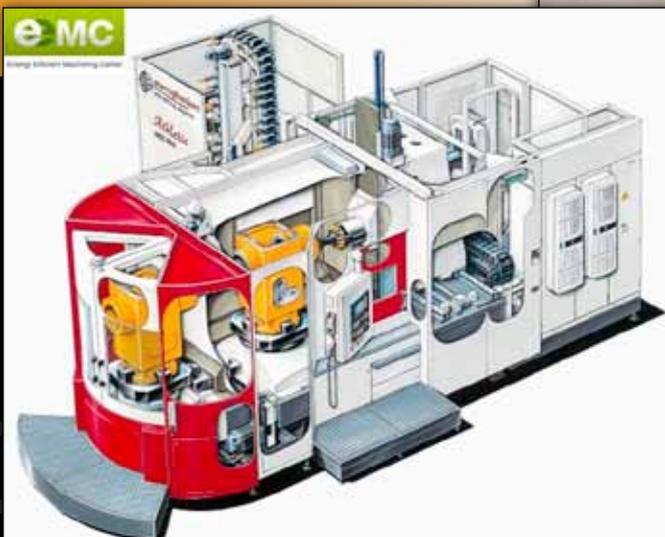
Cathy Defoor

Vice-President Proferro

► PROFERRO MACHINING: NEW INVESTMENTS IN AUTOMATION AND ROBOTIZATION

The Proferro machining department has multiple capabilities for the production of both prototypes and serial production using very diverse technologies such as CNC-chipping, gear manufacturing, grinding, heat treatment and welding. "The new machining centers enable us to shift into a higher gear in high-speed milling. The complex machining capabilities of these machines allow for the realization of high-quality components out of simple blocks of material. This is possible due to the five simultaneously controlled axes combined with a very high degree of accuracy, speed and dynamics" explains Eric Page, Manufacturing Manager at Proferro. "The maximum speed of the cutting tools in the machine is 30,000 min⁻¹, with a travel speed of 50 m/s. Due to the five-axis machining capabilities, the number of mounting positions is halved, allowing for higher accuracy. In order to perform all necessary machining operations, the machine has a tool-changer with 240 positions, which can be expanded to 360. The tool changing time is 3 seconds." For the CNC-programs, Proferro now uses TopSolid, the most advanced CAM-software. In 2012, both machines will be linked to a modular, automated loading system, which will further increase the autonomy and ease of use of the machines.

In recent months, Proferro has also invested in a new CNC-machine with a loading robot. Due to this investment in automation, Proferro will be able to realize the machining of all cast iron parts of the backrest of the Picanol looms in a cost-effective manner. The backrest regulates the tension on the warp yarns during the weaving process. This investment strengthens Proferro's position as one stop supplier and helps customers to simplify the logistical process.



For 2012, an additional investment is planned: a new Starrag-Heckert CNC-machine HEC 800x5 Athletic, on which, in addition to conventional CNC-milling, turning operations can also be performed. This 5-axis horizontal multitasking machining center will be used for the processing of larger castings in nodular as well as lamellar cast iron with a diameter of up to 1200 mm, and a height of up to 1000 mm. An automatic loading system will also be installed on this machine to increase the autonomy and flexibility.

▶ NODULAR CAST IRON PARTS FOR CLAAS TRACTOR SAS

Proferro has been providing cast iron parts to the agricultural machinery business for more than 20 years. Following the start-up of the new HWS molding line, Proferro has become a supplier to CLAAS Tractor SAS (member of the CLAAS Group) since early 2010. CLAAS Group, with headquarters in Harsewinkel (Germany), is one of the leading manufacturers of agricultural machinery in the world. It engages in the manufacture and sale of agricultural machinery worldwide, and also offers various production and industrial engineering products. CLAAS has been offering a complete range of tractors since 2003. Reliability, perseverance, and innovativeness are the qualities that make CLAAS a strong partner to the world's agricultural industry. Proferro is hence very proud to contribute to the growing success of the renowned CLAAS tractors. Currently, Proferro is providing with its HWS molding line nodular cast iron parts like front linkage support and chassis to be used on CLAAS Axion 900 tractors manufactured in Le Mans.



(picture: The CLAAS Tractor from Le Mans - a powerful transport vehicle).

▶ 75 YEARS OF PICANOL GROUP AND 75 YEARS OF OUR FOUNDRY

The history of the Picanol Group and Proferro goes back to 1936. In that year, the company Weefautomaten Picañol NV was founded by Charles Steverlynck, the Belgian industrialist. The company started in 1936 with the production of a new automatic loom, developed by the Spanish engineer Jaime Picañol (to whom the group owes its name). The first castings were only used for Picañol looms. After the difficult war years, the management decided in late 1946 to rearrange the foundry and to start using modern shock machines. This enabled the forming of the sand under pressure and quick release of the molds after casting. During the same period, Picañol was the first company to use synthetic sand for casting pieces. In the early sixties, Picañol decided to build a new foundry, and the choice was made to work with the most modern technology: the high-pressure forming. In October 1966, the foundry, which at that point possessed four cupola furnaces and two molding lines, was put into service. In 1970, approximately two-thirds of the production was for own use and the remaining one-third was for casting work for external customers, such as Ford Tractor and the German ZF. End of June 1976, the old foundry in the Polenlaan was closed. Meanwhile, the eighties were characterized by a continued growth of production for external customers. With a capacity that extensively exceeded its own needs, the production

of the company included serial casting (gearboxes) for trucks. In 1989, as two-thirds of sales of the foundry were realized outside of Picanol, the foundry division was split off from the other activities and made into a separate company, Proferro NV.

In 1994, Proferro obtained the ISO:9002 certificate. One year later, a new melting installation was put into service, a modern duplex unit with a furnace capacity of 18 to 27 tons per hour. In 1996, Proferro started with the production and sale of nodular cast iron in response to the changing market demand. In 2007, an ambitious investment plan for renewal and growth was approved, spearheaded by the new HWS-molding line. With this 16 million euro investment, Proferro was able to meet the demand for technically more difficult and larger pieces. The HWS-molding line became operational early 2010. Since then, several new projects for new customers have been launched.

More information on the history of the Picanol Group and the foundry can be found on the blog <http://75yearsofpicanolgroup.blogspot.com/>. To mark its 75th anniversary, the Picanol Group has published its own photo book, which details the most important moments in the rich history of Picanol in both word and image.

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