

Case Study: Irish Breeze

COUNTRIES INVOLVED:



Irish Breeze Ltd. Became a stand alone business in 2002 after a management buyout by Edward McCloskey of the Irish Breeze part of Boyne Valley Foods. It now has a turnover of over €3m. and employs 28 people.

Boyne Valley Foods has been very successful in identifying and exploiting import substitution opportunities in the last twenty years. Having become a successful supplier to supermarkets, they set out to identify non-food items they could manufacture and sell into the same customer base. They undertook a trawl through supermarket shelves to identify products that were being imported and which they could set up to manufacture and supply locally. They wanted products with some investment costs since they could finance the purchase of equipment and this would provide a barrier to entry to other competitors. They successfully set up Killeen Steel Wool Ltd. making and selling scouring pads, other steel wool products and refuse sacks.

They also identified cotton wool products as an opportunity and when Smith & Nephew announced that they were ceasing Irish manufacture, Boyne Valley stepped in and started to investigate the manufacture of these products. They recognised that they needed the production technology for cotton wool and asked Forbairt (now Enterprise Ireland) to help. Through their Technology Transfer service they identified a company in Malta called Prosan which was able to supply reconditioned machinery, manufacturing know-how and help them source raw materials.

A deal was concluded in 1993 to purchase the equipment and associated know-how and

Prosan shipped and installed the equipment. This is textile equipment known as a carding line and is not really new technology. However it was technology that Boyne Valley did not have and it enabled them to get started.

Prosan spent six weeks in Drogheda installing the equipment in the company's new premises and training the workforce. The company also took on a factory manager and a textile technician and quickly became independent of the Maltese company. They have added electronic controls to the equipment and have fine tuned it to get much more output than Prosan had promised. They have now purchased other machines and source their raw cotton directly from Pakistan.

The name 'Irish Breeze' originated in a company set up in Cork to manufacture soap which Boyne Valley took over. They decided to extend this brand to cotton wool products and now make a range of ten products from soaps to cotton pads which are sold to supermarkets in Ireland and the UK.

Irish Breeze is now a market and technology leader and has developed its own innovations which it is licensing to multinational companies in skincare, baby care and household cleaning.

