

swiss focus

“QUALITY CAN NEVER BE AN ISSUE FOR COMPROMISE”

eisberg - THE SALAD FACTORY

“Fresh cuts consist of nothing but raw materials; consequently, of course, we depend on nature. We accept its unpredictability, but we do our utmost to ensure that erratic nature brings us and our consumers only good surprises,” *eisberg* Hungary Managing Director **Zoltán Gazsi** tells Diplomacy & Trade in the company’s 3,000-sqm salad factory in Gyál just outside Budapest where ruling out unpleasant surprises is accomplished by state-of-the-art technology. Producing healthy, ready-made, extra fresh products is a great challenge and a great responsibility. With its modern, healthy and reliable convenience products, *eisberg* has been able to experience continuous growth, even during the economic crisis, owing to a professional, motivated team and strict quality assurance requirements. “We believe that motivated work is reflected in product output, therefore, as a Managing Director, I regard it as my most important mission to build a team that loves and enjoys their work, and I am proud that even under constant market pressure, we have a good team and great atmosphere,” Gazsi explains the company’s key to success. The history of the *eisberg* group started 40 years ago with a Swiss family’s agricultural production plant, which extended its operation to Hungary in 1992. The company took the lead on the fresh cut market here from its inception and has also become a significant player in the field of salad dressings. In 2014, *eisberg* started cooperation with a professional local producer in the Tokaj region, and introduced a wide range of fruit dressings selection based on natural vinegar

▶ SALAD PROCESSING LINE



▶ MANAGING DIRECTOR - ZOLTÁN GAZSI

that contains no artificial colorings, no preservatives and no added sugar, meeting all modern, healthy culinary requirements. The Tokaj dressings were awarded several prizes in 2016, such as the Dietetic Product of the Year in Hungary, the Sirha innovation award and World Tour by SIAL in Paris. Ingredients of salad mixes are grown mostly with open-field cultivation and gentle, nature-friendly methods by *eisberg*’s contracted suppliers in the spirit of their devoted commitment to sustainability. *eisberg* solely works with audited producers that are able to guarantee the GMO and pesticide residue free, microbiologically suitable, high quality ingredients. The company puts special emphasis on quality assurance: in addition to the control of suppliers, delivery, production, packaging and retail units are given strict attention, as well. Reliable and predictable quality can only be ensured with a reliable labor force; therefore, *eisberg* puts great emphasis on employee engagement. In the past few years, availability of proper workforce became an increasing problem. Most analyses point out that around 700,000 workers left the Hungarian

professional business sector, mainly to work in the UK, Austria and Germany. “It shows once again that being employed at a workplace constitutes a mutually agreed contract, a situation in which employees and managers respect and accept each other. It is no longer true that the employer can do whatever he or she wants because there is a chance of not finding a workforce with the necessary skills. However, a good compromise secures a long-term beneficial impact of the operation of the company. We offer more flexible worktime shifts, for instance, colleagues close to retirement age – or are retired already – are offered a flexible work schedule because they may not be able to work a full, eight-hour shift. Young students – often children of our staff – are offered good conditions to join us for the summer period. Salary level, bonus system and cafeteria package are revised



▶ RAW MATERIAL STORAGE WAREHOUSE

twice yearly. We are using creative ways, like facebook ads, to attract new workers. The importance of automatization is rapidly increasing, but people are still needed to run the machinery. We have increased the internal quality control and training staff, as quality can never be an issue for compromise! We attract young workers as they bring innovative ideas to the company but I believe that the generation of people in their fifties is going to be valued much more on the job market,” he says. Zoltán Gazsi, who has recently been nominated for the title ‘Manager of the Year’, is very proud of the fact that *eisberg* Hungary Ltd. has not only managed to stay profitable in this changing economic environment but also succeeded in having employees who are accustomed to working at an internationally recognized company and where they are appreciated. One not often hears about amenities that *eisberg* workers have access to,



▶ CUSTOMER SERVICE TEAM

like psychologists helping them if they have problems not only at the workplace but also in their private life, or the company lawyer being at their disposal with advice in any legal problem they may have. Such a working environment and fair wages by Hungarian standards are important but not sufficient to ensure the workforce that the company needs in an area close to Budapest, full of logistic centers and other production firms. There are staff living nearby the plant but some people commute by bus from as far as 150 kilometers and a few of them – and this is a new source of workforce for *eisberg* – from Sub-Carpathia, a region in Ukraine bordering Hungary. As of this spring, the *eisberg* group was purchased by one of the leading processors of meat and convenience products in Europe, the Bell Group. Zoltán Gazsi says the Swiss owners of *eisberg* realized that such a move would serve the long-term survival of the group if it joined a corporate identity with large international background. It was also important that the Bell Group is also based in Switzerland, therefore, the already established system of Swiss relations is maintained, the Swiss prudence, Swiss business morale and the well-earned trust in Swiss investors gave confidence to owners of *eisberg* that the company would continue to be in good hands. The Managing Director points out that he really appreciates ties with the Swiss Embassy, Swiss organizations (like SwissCham) and other Swiss companies in Hungary. Therefore, *eisberg* was happy to be the starting point of the ‘Grand Tour of Switzerland in Hungary’ a project conceived by Ambassador Paroz.

His direct, sympathetic personality, Zoltán Gazsi says, has greatly contributed to cherishing the image of Switzerland in Hungary – as did the ‘Grand Tour’ to further improving the system of relations between Swiss companies in Hungary. **IDEA**

A SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE COMPANY

▶ *eisberg* Hungary has been supporting the Institute for the Blind and Visually Impaired for several years. Health days have been organized with vegetable carving, salad lunches and various programs in several kindergartens and schools. The company is taking the message of healthy nutrition to 1,300 kindergartens through the ‘Think Healthy’ Program. *eisberg* is holding presentations at different places with the main objective of making young people love work: working is good, you just need to find the right, motivating job. “They have to look for their own path where skills and challenges will be in balance and they can develop in proportion with the challenges doing more and more complex jobs with joy,” Zoltán Gazsi says. “We support an important new project for the Neonatal Preterm Infant Care Unit of the Honvéd Hospital and the summer program for overweight children in the Bethesda Hospital – both in Budapest. We also participate in the GYERE (‘Children’s Health Program’) International Program organized by the Hungarian Dietetic Association,” he adds. *eisberg* has been the sponsor of the National Mobile Screening Unit for 4 years, raising awareness about the importance of prevention. The Managing Director highlights that *eisberg* Hungary Ltd. has also become a member of the Business Council for Sustainable Development, “where we are actively present and in 2015, I was appointed to be a member of the executive board. We work on several topics in the working groups and my personal favorite is the ‘Leaders of the Future’ program where I have already delegated three colleagues.” *eisberg* Hungary is the supporter of all events at the Department of Affective Psychology at Eötvös Lóránd University in Budapest, in addition to sponsoring conferences and causes like the Walk for the Quality of Birth/Giving Birth Program.