

# SugarTalk™

Sourcing : Manufacturing : Consulting : Delivering

**Ragus®**  
Specialists  
in Sugars

## A new factory and a new era in our 82 year history.



*Peter Eastick –  
Managing Director*

**While Ragus is proud of its heritage, its focus is always on the future. We are therefore delighted to announce the commissioning of a new multi-million pound factory to be built on the same Slough Trading Estate from which we have operated since 1928.**

Opening in 2012, our new home is set to be one of the most advanced factories in the industry. The 35,240 square foot facility will deliver highly efficient processing of raw sugar into sugar and syrup products for the baking, brewing, confectionery and pharmaceutical industries.

The new plant comprises advanced machinery for the drying, sieving, screening, blending and bagging of sugars, as well as nine syrup inversion pans and 16 syrup holding tanks, with room for further expansion. The advanced systems will help Ragus reduce the energy

consumption required to process sugars. The plant will also be compliant with all the latest production standards including ISO14001 and BRC Global Standards Directory. The factory will leave us positioned to take advantage of a number of new opportunities in the sugar market: deregulation and the trend of our competition becoming less specialised. The recent deregulation in the European sugar market signifies the biggest change in our market for over 40 years, and means that Ragus will be able to sell more products to more customers. Despite this – and the growing demand for specialised blends – economies of scale mean that many refiners are moving away from specialised sugars to produce more standard products in bulk. We see this as a huge opportunity. And the investment in the new factory means that Ragus can

continue to do what we do best, carrying our legacy far into the future. “We are very excited to be building a bespoke facility for the long term future. It shows the faith we have in our team and the Slough area generally to provide the skills we need to remain the UK’s most innovative manufacturers of sugar products”.

*Key to the planning and preparation of our move are the Ragus managers:*

*Frank O’Kelly, Commercial Support Manager*

*Philip Mold, Chief Chemist*

*Brian Davidson, Production Chemist*

*Richard Livermore, Quality Manager*

*Mel Boyle, Factory Manager*

*Tracy Trussler, Production & Logistics Manager*

*Kay Sandhu, Office Manager*



For more information  
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# SugarScene

## – a market update

*The 2010 sugar year will be remembered for 30 year price highs continuing as a backdrop to the market, whilst volatility in supply has stalked the market during the second half of 2010. A difficult supply side is expected throughout 2011, both globally and domestically.*

### **A continuing global deficit in sugar supply**

We reported towards the end of 2009 that the world supply/demand balance would be finely balanced in 2010, and I can confirm that this has turned out to have been the case. Global sugar prices dropped during the early part of the year but this position has been completely reversed again during the second half of the year.

Global production has grown in the last year and now stands at 160m tonnes, however world sugar consumption still exceeds production by around 10m tonnes.

Looking ahead to 2011, early estimates show production output will be increased by around 9%, however the overall global supply/demand balance may well be in deficit again.

Changes in weather patterns look likely to disrupt sugar production in some key growing areas during the crop cycle, leading to increased rainfall in some areas and dry conditions in others. This is a feature of the market that pervades all significant cane growing areas.

### **EU and domestic market sugar production**

We are now at half-way point in the sugar beet campaign. Reports suggest that the campaign

across the EU has been difficult due to the adverse wet weather during the harvest in various countries, however all member countries, with the exception of Greece and Italy, will fulfil their production “Quota”.

The EU sugar industry production quota has been reduced in size over the last 4 years, and as EU sugar consumption is well above the amount that can be sold by beet sugar producers under the terms of the EU Sugar Regime, the shortfall needs to be met by imported raw cane sugar. Due to the current high world market price, it is becoming clear that cane sugar trading companies are finding it difficult to purchase supplies from global suppliers at a competitive rate for consumption in the EU market.

### **EU sugar market summary**

It is now certain that the required quantity of raw cane sugar will not be shipped into the EU during the current period. The market either requires the global price to reduce to more sustainable levels, or the EU commission needs to take temporary action to make up any potential market supply shortfall.



## Naturally Sweet Treats

Tangerine Confectionery is Europe's largest independent confectionery manufacturer which has been achieved, over the last 10 years, through acquisitions of Taveners, Daintee, Parrs and Monkill. Ragus has been a supplier to the group for over a decade with syrups and treacles that are used in many well known icon brands such as liquorice allsorts, dolly mixtures and marshmallow. The re-launched Butterkist range now makes the company a market leader in popcorn products.

# Virtual Visit.



**It's important that you know your food production requirements are in the best of hands when you work closely with a supplier. However, in today's deadline driven world, we understand it's not always possible to take time out for a site visit and meet the people who are involved in the development and manufacture of your raw materials and ingredients.**

So, we've decided to bring the Slough-based Ragus operation to you in this SugarTalk newsletter. Our virtual tour, will take you through the individuals and processes that bring our products to your factory. You may find that, after reading it, you know us just that little bit better than you did before!

## First stop

Ragus Office Manager Kay Sandhu, who is also in charge of Customer Services, is usually the first point of contact for many. She's pretty much on first name terms with most of our customers, so may need little introduction.

"My role is predominantly to look after our clients," says Kay. However, it's vital that I also get along well with everyone involved in the supply chain so that I can help co-ordinate projects across all of the divisions.

A self-confessed 'people person' with 10 years' Customer Services experience, Kay is living proof of Ragus' commitment to forging strong, long-term relationships with its partners. Yet also fundamental to the success of the customer relationship is Ragus' expertise in sugar refining that has accumulated since the company was established 82 years ago.



## Good chemistry

Ragus' knowledge in sugar refining lies at the very heart of the business, and is routinely implemented in Ragus' onsite laboratory.

"The lab is headed up by our Chief Chemist, Philip Mold," explains Kay. Phil has over 30 years of experience, so he can tell you everything there is to know about the development of sugar and syrup products. Together with Ragus' Production Chemist Brian Davidson who has been with Ragus for over 15 years, Phil creates recipes to fit all colour, texture, taste and application requirements.

"Whether a company comes to Ragus needing the exact sugar composition for an established brand, or whether the customer is looking to develop a specialist recipe for a new product, the lab will create a product that perfectly fits the customer's requirements."

Once the chemical parameters of the product have been defined and approved by the customer, Kay processes the orders for the products before the job is committed to manufacture. From here matters are driven by Production and Logistics Manager Tracy Trussler.

## Changing times

Back in the day when Ragus was established, the factory floor was not considered a hospitable place for a lady. Tracy, however, believes that a woman's touch is certainly advantageous in her role to ensure every element of the production process is kept on track.

"My job requires a broad skill set, from forging strong working relationships with the team on the shop-floor, to booking the freight





and planning out the production details of each order,” says Tracy.

“I’m not the type of person who’ll shy away from getting my hands dirty. The shop floor is noisy and can sometimes require hard physical work but I love working here. It’s different every day, and the teamwork gives us all a great sense of comradeship.”

**Traditional systems that are environmentally-friendly**

The Ragus 25,000 sq ft manufacturing site takes the raw cane sugar materials and refines them into syrup, crystalline sugars, treacle and molasses products. For around three quarters of its production the company employs a wet filtration process. Despite being an age-old process that dates back 130 years or so, wet filtration is a testament to environmentally-friendly production methods as it creates such little waste.

Tracy explains, “The syrup that remains in the 2,500l vat at the end of a production run is reclaimed by flushing out the excess with the water required to make the next batch. This syrup is then used again, therefore completely avoiding any waste.”

Even the steam created by the process is used to heat up sugars elsewhere in the factory so the only waste is created by the disposal of the filter pads, which are completely biodegradable and chemical-free. “We say that sugar refining this way is the greenest food production method there is,” says



Tracy,” even more than brewing ale, which is always considered a very organic process.”

**Uncompromising on quality**

Quality control implemented at every manufacturing stage ensures exacting standards are always kept consistently high.

To this end, Quality Manager Richard Livermore devotes all his time to ensuring the necessary quality checks are carried out routinely and to the customers’ expectations.

Richard says: “Where food production is involved quality should be a given. At Ragus we have all the methodology, standards and certification in place to ensure we always deliver to the highest demands.”

He continues, “members of staff constantly undergo necessary food safety training, and we conduct strict and ongoing analysis throughout our manufacturing process. Everything is considered, from the protective clothing that visitors and workers need to wear to enter the factory, to food safety issues such as allergens and food intolerances. This area of the business is taken extremely seriously by the company.”



**Smooth delivery**

When production is complete, bags, pails and IBCs of pure sugar products are stored in Ragus’ warehouse, ready for distribution. Anyone outside of the food production industry will be forgiven for thinking that the hard work involved with the sugar refining process is

over at this point. However, the truth is that the logistics of delivering sugar and syrup products requires its own specific knowledge and transportation equipment.

Ragus provides a tailor-made delivery service to customers where products can be supplied in a range of standard or specialised packaging. The company also uses speciality road tankers that are temperature-controlled if necessary. This is vital to ensuring bulk ordered syrups and sugar products arrive with the customer in perfect condition.

**On track**

Both Kay and Tracy work closely together to organise delivery and transportation of the customers sugar products. Distributing the order marks the end of their hands on involvement in the product.

But for Ragus’ pure sugar recipes the adventure is only beginning. Ragus compounds go on to be used in a broad range of food and drink products. Once our tankers leave the depot for the nearby M4/M40/M25, it’s over to you, our customer. By incorporating them into your own product development plans, you apply your own skills and knowledge to turn them into a variety of items ready for the end user, the consumer.

For more information on Virtual Visit, please contact Kay Sandhu, email: [ks@ragus.co.uk](mailto:ks@ragus.co.uk)

# Raw Talent.

In a localised industry that is competing with the modern day mass production culture, Robert Wicks – proprietor of the Westerham Brewery in Kent – is dedicated to keeping the traditional South East brewing trade alive.



Westerham Brewery produces premium ales using locally grown hops from nearby Little Scotney Farm. The farm is one of only two hop farms remaining in the Weald of Kent. Owner The National Trust and farmer Ian Strang are as passionate about reviving Kent's hop trade as Robert is about brewing. The partnership sees both local farmer and independent brewer contributing to maintaining the brewing scene in what was once considered the heart of the international hop industry. "The secret to our flavoursome ales lies in the raw ingredients we use," says Robert. "From the locally grown hops to the malt to the Fairtrade Demerara sugar, the ingredients are paramount to creating the right blend and consumer experience for even the most discerning of beer drinker." Such carefully sourced ingredients can only result in full bodied 'character beers' that burst with the flavour of a bygone era, when brewing was a major industry in the area and the beer was enjoyed in the local and London pubs up until the 1960's.



Robert Wicks – proprietor of the Westerham Brewery in Kent.



Ian Strang of Little Scotney Farm, Robert Wicks and Ben Eastick.



A selection of the premium ales produced by the Westerham Brewery in Kent.

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