

## SEW-EURODRIVE launches new solution to cut costs in materials-handling supply chain

*16 March 2018: The latest trend in materials-handling has seen sectors such as warehousing, packing, and pick-and-place use cheaper components for light-load conveyor applications in order to reduce total supply-chain costs. In response to this latest customer requirement, SEW-EURODRIVE South Africa has launched its new ECDriveS® 24 V drive system.*

The ECDriveS® is an acronym for Electronically Commutated Drive System, a brushless DC gearmotor. It also stands for 'easy drive', a simple and cost-efficient drive solution for roller-conveyor applications, SEW-EURODRIVE South Africa National Sales Manager **Norman Maleka** explains.

The latest drive solution was launched in Germany in 2017 following an extensive research-and-development programme and customer consultation, and is now being introduced to the South African market. "We have commenced with training to ensure our staff are familiar with the new product, and are currently assembling six units to go to all of our branches countrywide for customer demonstrations," Maleka adds.

A standout feature of the new drive system is that it is easily integrated into existing solutions, as it features both Ethernet and PROFINET communications for seamless interfacing. "The ease of integration is a major selling point for this product, as there is no need to change networks. Other advantages are precise positioning and ramp-up and ramp-down, and the ability to vary the conveyor speed accordingly."

Sensor input and output is provided for easy monitoring, with an alarm triggered in the event of any problem. The drive system has an IP 54 protection rating, in addition to an IP 66 version for more demanding applications such as industrial and food-and-beverage applications. The temperature range is -10°C to 40°C, while the roller speed is up to 5 m/s. Gearbox speeds range from 8.5 rpm to 645 rpm for added flexibility.

"This so-called 'easy drive' is easy to work with, set up, install, and maintain. This means it is particularly suited to African operating conditions, where on-

site technical skills are often limited,” Maleka comments. Set-up is either by dual in-line package (DIP) switches, or the drive system can be programmed using SEW-EURODRIVE proprietary software. Despite the simplicity of the drive system, it even boasts a built-in encoder for precise positioning. “The encoder allows for accurate positioning of items whenever the conveyor is stopped, which is of particular benefit to customers with sorting applications.”

While SEW-EURODRIVE has a wide range of products, particularly gearmotors, the prevailing trend in materials-handling is for smaller, quick-to-assemble, easy-to-handle and cost-effective solutions. “If a customer only needs to move empty cardboard boxes or containers, for example, a high-end gearbox is not cost-effective, in addition to the space constraints in terms of installation and commissioning,” Maleka points out. These customers typically have low power requirements of only 30 W to 40 W, which means that a 1.5 kW motor and gearbox is not an ideal solution.

ECDriveS® is a highly-compact solution, with roller size ranging from 300 mm to 1 200 mm, meaning it is especially tailored for smaller conveyor applications. “These are used mainly in pack houses in agricultural and farmers’ co-operative applications, where the bulk of the items are packed manually, and then placed on a conveyor to be loaded onto a truck. No parameterisation is required, which means no complex elements such as a PLC. It is truly a ‘plug-and-play’ system that saves customers time and money.”

While SEW-EURODRIVE has already been involved in this smaller end of the market, the launch of ECDriveS® will position itself as a preferred solutions provider. “We have tended to focus on larger applications. However, the introduction of ECDriveS® means we can now compete effectively, especially against inferior-quality and cheaper imports,” Maleka notes.

What gives SEW-EURODRIVE the leading edge in the marketplace is its service support. “We hold over R130 million worth of stock at any given time to ensure we can provide comprehensive solutions to our customers. Our well-established footprint throughout Africa extends our aftermarket capability even further.”

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ECDriveS® will be launched officially at bauma CONEXPO Africa 2018. Although this expo is aimed mainly at the construction industry, many system integrators and end users will be present who use SEW components in one form or another. "Our strategy is not to limit ourselves to particular industries or products. We showcase our full range because we are involved everywhere.

"Gearmotors have multiple applications, from construction equipment such as brick- and block-making machines to warehousing, logistics, and even hoisting. We therefore cannot just select a couple of products in order to focus on a few select market segments. We aim to go full out, showcasing our total solutions approach."

Maleka concludes that the introduction of the high-volume ECDriveS® is integral to SEW-EURODRIVE's strategy of offering a total solution. "We strive continuously to introduce products that add to our overall portfolio, and which complement our existing range. This is linked to our approach of targeting system integrators. At the end of the day, we want to make our customers aware that we can offer them complete end-to-end solutions, and not just components."

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