

PRESS RELEASE

BI assists sugar industry with essential maintenance in 'off-crop' season

31 January 2019: Leading supplier Bearings International (BI) assists its sugar-industry clients with essential maintenance and equipment upgrades of sugar mills, especially in 'off-crop' season.

BI has been supplying industrial power transmission products to the sugar industry for the past 60 years. An area of expertise has been the design, selection, and supply of specialised chains for sugar mills in particular. "It is part of BI's business ethos to view each client as a partner, and to assist where we can in keeping sugar-mill performance at the expected level," BI Sugar Division Branch Manager **Nick Allanson** explains.

"As a supplier of sugar chain, bearings, and power transmission products to mills in KwaZulu-Natal, and several countries in Southern Africa, delivering on-time is critical. We as suppliers have to manage our stock and delivery according to the various requirements of the sugar mills. The production of sugar cane is seasonal by nature and, as we know, climatic seasonality is not something we have control over, and it can vary from one year to the next."

Through experience, BI has taken on the responsibility of carrying stock of chain components to ensure it has replacement chains and components available before the next season commences. Part of this partnership is assisting in determining when a client's equipment requires replacement, or when it would be more cost-effective to refurbish.

"Refurbishment is carried out at our facility in Durban where we strip, inspect, and reassemble the chain using new components where necessary," Allanson explains. "It's always a tight timeline, meaning months of advance planning."

BI is the official distributor for SENQCIA Chain, formerly known as Hitachi, manufactured in Japan, and Ewart Chain, manufactured in England. Orders for new chains and components are placed months in advance, with sizes and quantities to suit the various conveyor carriers. BI also supplies ordinary transmission chain, bearings, industrial gearboxes, and lubricants for the sugar industry. On-site inspections throughout the year form part of its value-added service offering.

"Our ability to advise a client whether or not a particular component needs to be refurbished, or will run for another season, is vital in the industry, especially given the tight margins. It is expected of suppliers to the industry to assist in reducing the total cost of ownership. To this end, we have to be inventive about extending the life of components without putting the production capacity of sugar mills at risk," Allanson points out.

This strategy of helping to contain costs by getting longer life out of chain and refurbishing specific components where possible has made BI one of the most proactive companies in its industry. "For us, it's all about assisting industry with risk management and lowest total cost of ownership," Allanson highlights.

In supplying sugar mills in Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi, Swaziland, and Mozambique, a major facet of the BI offering is providing technical advice on power transmission products and equipment, and training the operators dealing with these components. Technical training in these countries is very necessary for maintaining productivity of sugar mills, and empowering local communities to become more self-sufficient.

"The sugar industry itself identified a need for training its employees, but often there is a dearth of experience to conduct this. We believe in empowering sugar mills to carry out basic installation and

replacement where possible. However, we do visit our clients regularly, and can oversee installation where required.”

Allanson stresses that while growth was muted in 2018, there was a greater emphasis on environmental sustainability and opportunities. “Sugar mills typically generate their own electricity while the crushing season is in progress, and often have excess to their requirements, which in some countries is sold and fed into the national grid.”

Environmental sustainability is a major focus in the sugar industry at present, coupled with socio-economic goals to ensure that adequate job creation and training initiatives are in place. “BI’s own social and environmental policies have much in common with that of the sugar industry. We therefore see ourselves as a partner aligned to the sugar industry, and look forward to a positive long-term future,” he concludes.

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Notes to the Editor

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About BI

BI is a member of the Hudaco Group. BI is a leading distributor of bearings and power transmission products in Southern Africa. With its customer-focused approach, BI is committed to delivering value to all its stakeholders, while offering quality solutions that make a real difference to optimising plant availability and turnaround time. With over 60 years in the bearings and power transmission industry, BI puts its experience to good use by going great lengths to ensure their product range and services meet the changing needs of clients, industry and business. Backed by an elite technical team, BI covers the full spectrum of customer requirements, and is able to ensure immediate availability of products through a nationwide network of branches.

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