A large industrial tray filled with cocoa beans in a factory setting. The beans are spread out in a long, narrow row, filling most of the frame. The tray is made of metal and is part of a larger industrial structure. The background shows a clean, industrial environment with white walls and ceiling. A fire extinguisher is visible in the distance. The lighting is bright and even.

Specialties –
from bean
to bar.

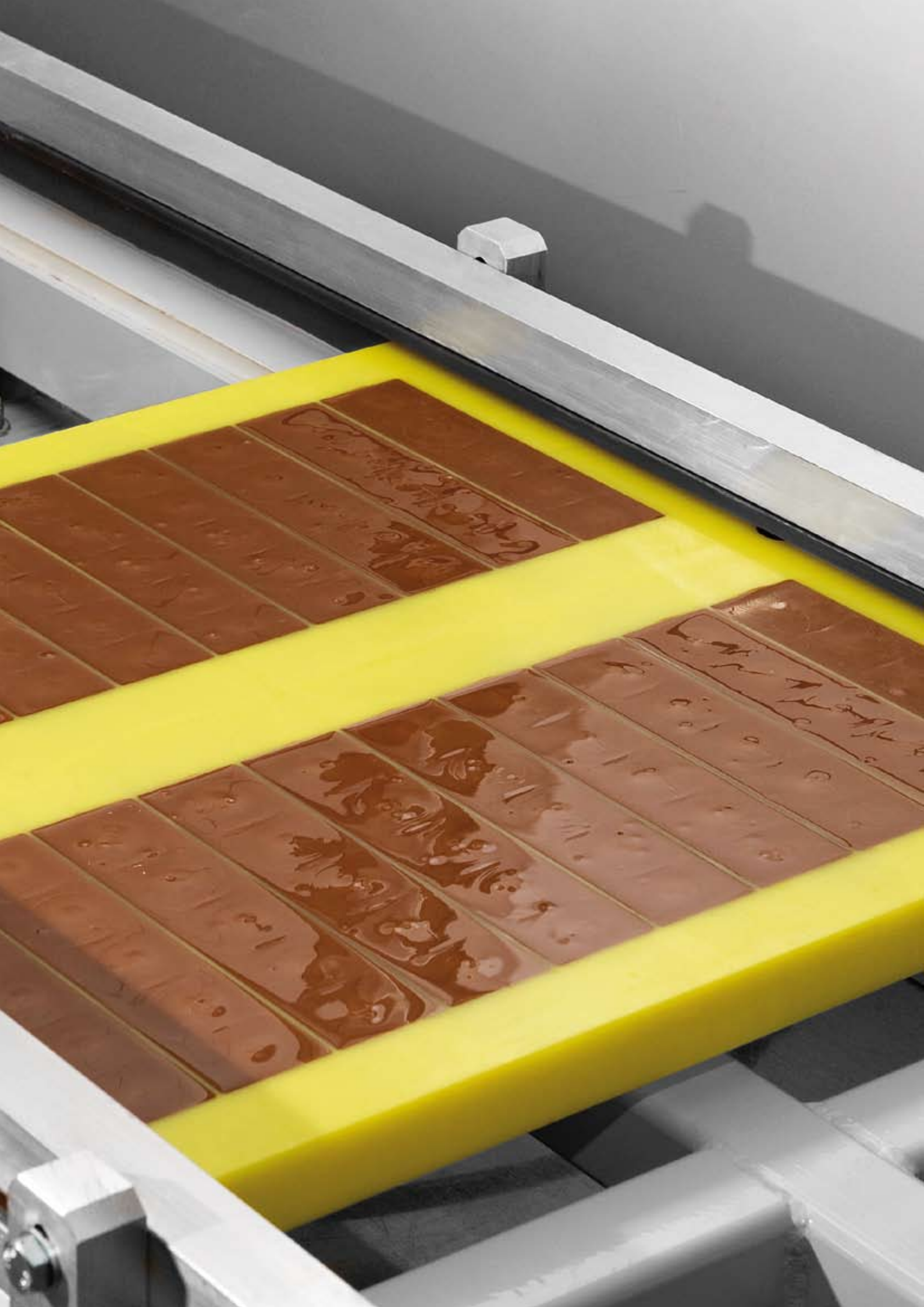
Zotter Chocolate Manufactory,
Riegersburg (A).

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Josef Zotter.

Special plant for a choco genius.

Josef Zotter started up his own chocolate factory in 2007 – for producing chocolate “from bean to bar.” Buhler built his “chocolate researcher’s” dream plant.

In the chocolate industry, he has been making a big splash for a number of years now: Josef “Sepp” Zotter; born in the Austrian town of Feldbach in 1961 as an Aquarius; a cook, waiter, and confectioner by training; married and a father of three. Since 1987, Josef Zotter has been putting his own chocolate ideas into practice – first in a back room of his confectioner’s shop in Graz, and since 1999 in his chocolate manufactory in Bergl, a hamlet located near the town of Riegersburg in the Styria.

Hand-scooped chocolate

For producing his hand-made chocolate bars, Josef Zotter uses the term “hand-scooped.” On a refrigerated table of several meters’ length, he applies a first layer of chocolate and lets it cool. This is followed by one or two layers of various fillings (see box). The filling is covered by another manually applied chocolate layer. Once dried, this huge piece of chocolate is cut up into individual slabs, which are covered by a jacket of chocolate. The packaging is designed by art designer Andreas H. Gratze, who creates a special label for every new variety. For his Zotter designs, Gratze has been nominated for the Designer Award 2009

“In our chocolate manufactory, we produce chocolate from bean to bar. We have installed all the production processes in-house, from cocoa bean roasting to liquor refining, conching and chocolate molding. And because only the very best is good enough for us, we chose Buhler as a supplier.”

Josef Zotter,
Founder and owner of the Zotter Chocolate
Manufactory in Riegersburg, Austria.



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of the Federal Republic of Germany. Beside his strong affinity with art, Josef Zotter is also distinguished by his marked environmental consciousness. Zotter has been a license partner of Fairtrade Austria since 2004. He purchases all the basic raw materials such as cocoa and crude sugar as organic-grade products through Fair Trade organizations.

Decision to make his own products

Confectioner Zotter very soon met with success with his ideas and compositions. Sales shot up by two-digit percentage points year after year. After having initially purchased the chocolate he processes into bars from outside sources, Josef Zotter decided in 2005 to build his own chocolate factory. "At long last I had saved enough money to make this dream of mine come true," remembers Josef Zotter. "By making my own chocolate in-house, I can create an even greater number of variations. Since our chocolate factory has been up and running, I can now at last put into practice what I had only been thinking out in theory for years." It was clear to Josef Zotter that only the very best plant could be good enough for producing the top-class chocolate he needs. So he contacted the chocolate specialists at Buhler. Planning soon started. The new, very visitor-friendly factory was set up in Bergl near Riegersburg, in a natural setting and neighboring directly on farmland. The project was launched in 2006, and as early as in the summer of 2007, Josef Zotter could start up his own chocolate manufactory.

Small, but top-notch

The heart of the Zotter manufactory is the chocolate plant. With its output of 500 kilograms per hour, it is at the lower end of the capacity range for such installations. But here as elsewhere, Zotter's motto is "small, but top-notch." The plant comprises all the production stages that every other chocolate line has, too. The raw cocoa beans are cleaned for the first time in the receiving section. A *RoaStar*[™] roaster gives them the specific flavor of the chocolate that will be produced from them later on. The beans, still hot, are debacterized and then ground on a bead mill. The cocoa liquor thus obtained is placed in intermediate storage. Additional operations are required for making the basic chocolate. The cocoa liquor is transferred to a

twin-shaft *VersiMix*[™] mixer, where the other ingredients are added. This mixer is also used for producing the specialty fillings. A *PreFiner*[™] 900 pre-refiner and a *Finer*[™] 1300 refiner finish the chocolate mass grinding stage. An *ELK* conche then gives the required flavor and delicate consistency to the chocolate. The finished chocolate mass is pumped to tanks, from where it can be retrieved for the final production of the chocolate bars. Every day, four to eight metric tons of basic chocolate are produced by this process in the Zotter manufactory. As a supplement to the handmade chocolate specialties, Zotter is now also producing small bars of solid chocolate. For this purpose, he uses a *MultiStar*[™] bar molding system from Buhler Bindler.

Over 100,000 visitors a year

Josef Zotter has spent 17 million euros on his factory. With his 100-odd employees, he processes 450 metric tons of cocoa, 250 tons of sugar, one million liters of organic alpine milk, 129 kilograms of genuine vanilla, and a lot of other ingredients in a single year. Despite these respectable quantities, Zotter is still a "small player" in the chocolate industry. Zotter chocolate is sold exclusively through retailers and the Internet. The Zotter brand is now also a household word for finest chocolate. Forty-five percent of its output is exported to 17 countries in Europe, North America, and Asia. The new manufactory has also become a tourist attraction. Every year, over 100,000 people visit Bergl to tour the Zotter chocolate manufactory. (bos)



For more information on the Zotter project, please contact:
Guido Högger, Sales Manager
Chocolate & Cocoa Business Unit
at Buhler in Uzwil
T +41 71 955 32 44
F +41 71 955 35 82
guido.hoegger@buhlergroup.com

Bühler AG
CH-9240 Uzwil, Switzerland
T +41 71 955 11 11
F +41 71 955 35 82
sc.buz@buhlergroup.com
www.buhlergroup.com

