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#ISM

ISM 2021 is "safely" taking place: Trade fair planning in challenging times

An interview with Anne Schumacher, Vice President Food and Food Technology, Koelnmesse

On 31 January 2021 the world's largest trade fair for sweets and snacks, ISM, and the supplier trade fair ProSweets Cologne, which is staged simultaneously, will open their doors. That is definite as far as Anne Schumacher, Vice President Food & Food Technology at Koelnmesse, is concerned! Around 80 percent of the exhibition space is currently already booked. The industry is ready for the re-start and so is ISM. The international industry meeting point of the sweets and snacks sector is treading new paths in times of the pandemic and has developed an extensive package of measures. In the following interview Anne Schumacher explains the current state of affairs of the trade fair and which extensive measures ISM is implementing to guarantee the safe orchestration of the trade fair.

Around four months before the 51st ISM opens at the end of January 2021 in Cologne, COVID-19 is still having a strongly restrictive impact on life and the economy. What is the current booking status for ISM 2021?

Schumacher: We were able to register a new exhibitor record for the 50th edition of ISM. We will without doubt not be able to match these figures in 2021, but 77 percent of the entire event surface of the coming ISM has already been booked to-date. In the light of the current developments and the ongoing uncertainties and travel restrictions this is a very good result. Apart from a few cancellations almost all important market leaders will be taking part again. Overall, exhibitors from 59 countries have registered. In addition to Germany, Italy, Belgium, Spain, Great Britain, Poland, France, the Netherlands and Greece are among the countries represented most strongly at ISM in terms of area booked. Beyond Europe we have received applications for instance from Australia, Thailand and Canada.

The many country pavilions make up an important part of ISM. Have there been cancellations here?

Schumacher: We can also announce a positive result regarding the country pavilions at the present moment in time. Nearly all of the participants from last year have registered for the coming ISM again - albeit on a smaller scale in some cases. We are especially delighted to welcome newcomers from Latvia, Portugal and Thailand. We are also awaiting a smaller country pavilion from the USA, comprising primarily of companies that have a distribution company in Germany.



ISM
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What is the situation with new exhibitors at ISM 2021?

Page

2/5

Schumacher: We are noticing that especially in challenging times like these ISM remains to be a central platform for many companies, which allows them to present their products to a wide trade audience, but where they can push the export business too. We are thus particularly pleased that 33 new exhibitors from 23 countries have already confirmed their participation. Newcomers from Australia are worth a special mention here. New companies from Europe are also on board, from Greece, Romania, Lithuania and Poland.

The currently applicable travel restrictions will not exactly make it easy for the trade visitors from most recently over 140 countries to come to Cologne. How do you intend to compensate for the probably lacking physical presence of many international visitors?

Schumacher: Next year, ISM 2021 will be offering its customers new digital formats to promote the establishment of contacts and presentation of products. In addition to the physical trade fair, the world's largest trade fair for sweets and snacks is offering a new online platform for registered exhibitors and trade visitors as well as for media representatives. Via "Matchmaking 365+" ISM exhibitors can thus also reach trade visitors beyond the physical exhibition dates of ISM 2021. In addition to conventional forms of establishing contacts, the platform now also enables meetings per video, chat or audio. This opens up the possibility to the participants of the trade fair to establish business contacts prior to the opening of the fair already. Product presentations and new products can also be presented within a digital Exhibitor Showroom in the form of text, photos or video contents. Beyond this, Matchmaking 365+ makes industry-related content in the form of industry knowledge, interviews or also the contents of the trade fair event programme available. In this way, both trade visitors and media representatives can inform themselves about the latest products and further industry contents of the companies prior to, during and after the trade fair. Access to the digital Matchmaking platform of ISM will be granted to registered trade visitors and media representatives free of charge. In the scope of Matchmaking 365+, ISM 2021 is offering its customers a hybrid trade fair experience for the first time.

Have you already made experiences here with other trade fairs? How is this to work in concrete terms? When is this digital platform of ISM kicking off?

Schumacher: Here at Koelnmesse we have already been successfully implementing tools for establishing contacts and networking for some time already. For example at Kind + Jugend, the leading international trade fair for high-quality baby and toddler outfitting. For ISM and ProSweets Cologne 2021, we are offering the exhibitors access to Matchmaking 365+ from October 2020 onwards. We are testing further tools and platforms via trade fairs like gamescom or DMEXCO. We successfully created a purely digital, global gamescom event for the first time at the end of August 2020. More than 2 million simultaneous spectators alone followed the gamescom opening show: Opening Night Live. DMEXCO, the central meeting point of all important decision-makers from the digital economy, marketing and innovation sectors, was also exclusively a digital edition this year. Whether live talks or

conferences, learning sessions, virtual meeting rooms, meeting points for mutual exchange as well as showrooms for product presentations, we are letting all our cognitions on digital formats flow into ISM. Beyond this, Koelnmesse is also relying on digital solutions abroad too, for instance in the case of the imminent Thaifex Anuga Asia this month, which is taking place in a hybrid format or IDEM Singapore, which was exclusively staged as a digital platform in August 2020. In this way, via the continual exchange of experiences with our colleagues, who have successfully implemented digital formats or tools, we regularly gain new cognitions, which we incorporate into the planning of further trade fairs.

The protection of the exhibitors and visitors is an extremely important point. What do the exhibitors have to heed when holding meetings, regarding the placement of exhibits and overall in terms of stand construction?

Schumacher: Koelnmesse has developed an extensive package of measures under the hashtag #B-SAFE4business, which ensures that attending the trade fair is safe for all participants. We have summarised measures to protect exhibitors and trade visitors under the four headings "visit safe", "show safe", "meet safe" and "stay safe". These headings regulate aspects such as the safe interaction of participants at the trade fair and will ensure that companies and industry professionals can decide to attend the event with full confidence. Our website offers exhibitors a guideline, which contains concrete specifications regarding stand construction. It is important for the exhibitors to know that the number of visitors at the individual stands is not regulated as long as the minimum distance of 1.5 metres between the visitors and the exhibitors' staff is guaranteed at the exhibition stand. The opportunity of presenting product information directly at the borders of the stand may possibly be restricted in order to allow room for movement in the aisles around the stand so that crowds of people are avoided. Of course, a normal stand design with the corresponding decoration is possible. Regarding the placement of exhibits, it is above all important that sufficient free space is available to enable the observance of the minimum safety distance. A good ventilation of the exhibition stands is also an essential criterion in the current times. Both in our exhibition halls as well as in our tower block the used air is extracted to the outside and 100% new fresh air is drawn in so that aerosols cannot spread via our ventilation system.

The food service and the tastings at the stands could also prove to be a risk?

Schumacher: Tastings at the exhibition stand are in principle possible and can take place in the scope of a meeting at a table or in the form of tasting samples at the info counter. However, here both packed and unpacked tasting samples are only allowed to be handed out by the stand staff if all of the hygiene regulations are complied with. We cannot allow the usual self-service method, i.e. taking samples from a bowl, at the coming ISM, not even for packed samples. Show cooking is for example still possible, as long as this is shielded off by a corresponding protective anti-spit shield. The trade fair's food service is also available whereby the Corona requirements have to be complied with.

Do the trade visitors have to reckon with special precautionary measures?

Schumacher: There is an extensive hygiene and safety concept for the visitors as well. It is important that all of the trade visitors inform themselves about the measures via the website of ISM in the run-up to the trade fair. All protective measures are incorporated into our "#B-SAFE4business" concept. These can be called up for ISM at <https://www.ism-cologne.de/die-messe/ism/re-start-koelnmesse/b-safe4business.php>. It is particularly worth mentioning that the admission ticket sales are exclusively taking place online. The admission tickets are available in a mobile procedure and facilitate contactless admission. In the scope of purchasing the admission tickets, a full registration of all participants will occur to ensure that contact persons can be identified fast in the case of a Corona infection. Further important, precautionary measures include for example the placement of disinfection dispensers at all essential points of the grounds, the regular cleaning and disinfection of washrooms and other contact surfaces as well as the implementation of ultra-modern ventilation systems, which enable a separate air intake and output. Furthermore, for the protection of all trade fair participants, a face mask obligation applies for all participants at ISM 2021 and ProSweets Cologne 2021 except when seated, i.e. at the exhibition stands or in the food service areas.

Could it come to access limitations for example in the individual halls or for the trade fair itself, especially on the most popular days, such as Monday or Tuesday?

Schumacher: In line with the stipulations of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia, we have to observe certain requirements at our trade fairs, these include among others that a safety distance of 1.5 metres is adhered to on our fair grounds, which corresponds to a certain number of trade visitors. Due to this regulation, we have altered the admission ticket sales for ISM, so that next year only day tickets are available. As a result of the online registration and online admission tickets, we can continually keep an eye on the number of visitors and can thus precisely control the number of trade visitors.

Is Koelnmesse contemplating introducing any additional services to further increase the safety of the guests?

Schumacher: We keep a close eye on the developments related to COVID-19 so that we can constantly reassess the hitherto planned measures of our "#B-SAFE4business" concept and where necessary make any further adaptations that are conducive to the safety and health of the participants of ISM 2021. Furthermore, we engage in a regular exchange with the city, state and the health authorities in order to ensure that we are complying with all legal stipulations. The health and safety of our exhibitors and visitors takes top priority. We will thus do our utmost to organise a Corona-compatible and safe ISM 2021. It is however important that we satisfy the expectations of our customers. The industry and trade are for example indicating to us that business has to continue in spite of COVID-19 and they are particularly looking forward to face-to-face meetings after this long time without trade shows, because business relations cannot exist long-term without them. Beyond this, trying out products is essential for the buyers for their decision-making process. After all, who wants to just look at sweets and snacks digitally.

Koelnmesse - Global Competence in Food and FoodTec:

Koelnmesse is an international leader in organising food fairs and events regarding food and beverage processing. Trade fairs such as the Anuga, ISM and Anuga FoodTec are established world leaders. Koelnmesse not only organises food and food technology trade fairs in Cologne, Germany, but also in further growth markets around the globe, for example, in Brazil, China, Colombia, India, Italy, Japan, Thailand and the United Arab Emirates, which have different focuses and contents. These global activities enable us to offer our customers a network of events, which in turn grant access to different markets and thus create a basis for sustainable and stable international business.

Page

5/5

Further Information is available at: <http://www.global-competence.net/food/>

The next events:

ProSweets Cologne - The international supplier fair for the sweets and snacks industry, Cologne 31.01. - 03.02.2021

Anuga FoodTec - the international supplier fair for the food and drink industry, Cologne 23.03. - 26.03.2021

Alimentec - International food, beverage and hospitality trade fair, Bogotá 08.06. - 11.06.2021

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