



In the south of Ethiopia, **Garamba Bottling PLC** has commissioned its first line for bottling water. A complete line from Krones and Kosme proved to be the ideal choice for the start-up company.

Start-up in greenery

Paradisiacal surroundings, a secluded spring and naturally pure water – for Biruk Haile Shemer the preconditions for a water company of his own could not have been better. And so he decided to build a bottling plant in Arbegona, enabling him to offer artesian water on the Ethiopian market in future.

From Hawassa, the capital of the “Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Region” in the south of Ethiopia, it’s only about 70 kilometres to Arbegona, where the water’s spring and bottling plant are located. But with an SUV it takes a good three hours on a rough gravel and dusty track. You drive through a luxuriantly green hilly landscape, past tiny villages and lots of individual, traditional-style round huts with diminutive smallholdings. On the paths, people mostly travel on foot, and occasionally three or even four at a time on a motorbike. You don’t see many cars here. The extremely friendly and welcoming people usually live off the produce from their smallholdings; industrial estates are conspicuous by their absence. And yet there’s something special about this region: the fact that water is available here all the year round – not something you can take for granted in Ethiopia. But that’s precisely what makes these hilly uplands so attractive for their inhabitants.

New hall with space for expansion

One of the gravel roads touches upon the spring location at Mount Garamba, which is about twelve kilometres away from the bottling plant. The water that bubbles up from the ground here is a veritable treasure, and Garamba Bottling’s plant is this region’s first industrial facility. But this, too, is harmoniously integrated into the hills. The bottling hall itself is a two-storey construction. The lower level accommodates the utilities and a generator that has to step in whenever the power supply from the national grid falters. The upper floor, which can also be accessed at ground level from the back, houses the new bottling line, which began operation early in 2019. The hall has been dimensioned to permit a second line to be installed in future.

“I’m very comfortable with the line from Kosme and Krones,” says Technical and Production Manager Mikias Yigebahal, who can already look back on seven years of experience in the beverage and preform industries with various bottling lines. “The quality of the machines, their efficiency, and the entire system are significantly better than what I was used to. In particular, the block comprising the blow-moulder and the filler ensures that the line

works smoothly,” he emphasises. “The change-over times for the blow-moulding modules are short and the machine is easy to maintain, not least because any faults in the automated system are indicated immediately on the displays. This makes our work easier.”

The line is currently running in two shifts, each with two operators of engineer or technician status. There are about 100 people working at the plant, most of them from the direct vicinity. Garamba thus deliberately also created jobs in this economically weak region. “Integration of society as a whole, and direct help for the community, are part of my personal philosophy,” says proprietor Biruk Haile Shemer. For example, he has also given financial support to many private individuals over whose land the twelve-kilometre-long water pipeline from the spring to the bottling plant was laid. “That was one of the major challenges in this project,” he explains.

Water treatment using ultra filtration

For water treatment, the plant uses a Krones Hydronic UF in the basic version, in which the water is ultra-filtered using start-of-the-art membrane technology and hollow fibres. Thanks to the

Combined line from Krones and Kosme

Garamba’s first line, rated at 16,000 containers per hour, bottles top-quality still spring water from the nearby eponymous mountain. It includes:

- Kosme SynchroBloc comprising a blow-moulder KSB 8R block-synchronised with a Kosme Volufill filler
 - Krones Contiroll wrap-around labeller
 - Two Krones Checkmat inspectors
- The fulls are still being palletised manually.



In the SynchroBloc a Kosme KSB 8R blow-moulder is block-synchronised with a Kosme Volufill filler.

Garamba uses a Kosme Volufill filler for bottling.



bypass construction, the individual modules can be cleaned by backwashing with ultra-filtrate without having to interrupt operation. “The Hydronomic is very easy to operate. Except for the CIP cleaning routine, we don’t need any chemicals at all. What’s more, ultra filtration is a very natural system that preserves the minerals contained in the spring water,” is Mikias Yigebahal’s verdict, and Biruk Haile Shemer adds: “We’re one of the very few water producers in Ethiopia that’s bottling such a high-quality, natural, untreated spring water from such an unspoiled region. Most of the country’s approximately 80 water producers use water from wells or treated surface water.”

Three cornerstones of a holistic production operation

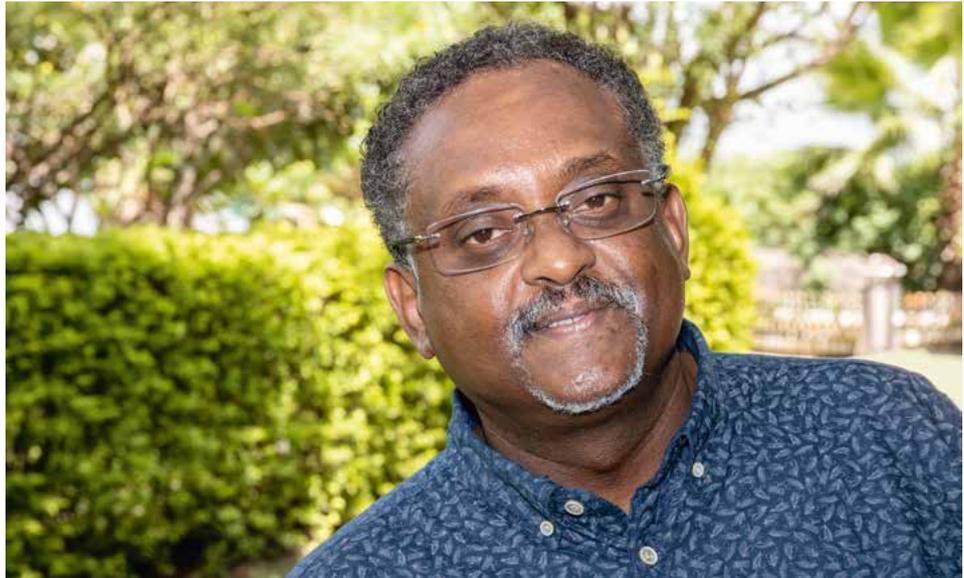
Actually, Biruk Haile Shemer heads a company with 1,000 employees, which produces doors and windows made of aluminium, plus the material itself. As a qualified architect, he has worked in both Ethiopia and England. “But right from the start it was my dream to produce beverages. At first, I considered an energy drink, but sales for this product category are pretty weak in Ethiopia,” he relates. Now he’s making this dream come true with Garamba water.



Garamba's first line, rated at 16,000 containers per hour, bottles top-quality still spring water from the nearby eponymous mountain.



For water treatment, the plant uses a Krones Hydronic UF, in which the water is ultra-filtered using start-of-the-art membrane technology and hollow fibres.



Proprietor Biruk Haile Shemer

Because six years ago, quite by accident he discovered this spring location, and was immediately fascinated by its unspoiled natural beauty. “The product has to speak for itself,” he comments. “I then visited almost all the water producers in Ethiopia, as well as bottlers in Turkey, in Uganda and in China, so as to acquire a feeling for the technology and the market involved. It was four years ago that I first came into contact with Krones and asked them to explain their corporate philosophy. Krones’ agency in Ethiopia was very helpful throughout. After taking due time for consideration, I then decided at leisure that Krones was the right partner for me,” he relates.

For Biruk Haile Shemer, there are three indispensable cornerstones for a holistic production operation: natural spring water, state-of-the-art machinery, and well-trained staff. “You can’t afford to break this chain, otherwise the quality will suffer,” is his firm conviction. “If we had, for example, chosen a differently designed system for water treatment, there would perhaps have been a risk of recontamination. Ultra filtration is the product-friendliest process for water treatment; it preserves all the TDS (total dissolved solids, Ed.), which in our water come to 70 milligrams per litre. We use only ozonisation for extending the shelf-life.”

“I’m sticking with Krones”

Garamba offers its South Spring brand in four bottle sizes. With the 1.2-litre format, in particular, Garamba has created a unique selling point, since 1.0-litre containers are the usual size on the market.

When it comes to marketing his water, the proprietor sees no problems: “We’re filling a gap between supply and demand. I’m confident that Ethiopian consumers’ awareness for top-quality water will rise, and demand for quality will increase.” In a first step, sales in high-class hotels and embassies are to primarily address the tourists and ex-pats in Ethiopia. The national carrier Ethiopian Airlines will likewise be offering South Spring on its flights. For broader distribution nationwide, Garamba is also utilising the traditional sales channels, supplied from a warehouse in Hawassa.

“Sales of packaged water in Ethiopia are set to rise considerably, and our water brand will participate in this upturn,” believes Biruk Haile Shemer. Which is why next year he already intends to order a second bottling line, this time rated at 30,000 bottles per hour – once again from Krones, on the principle of “never change a running system”. “Krones is a very serious and dependable company. The people there know what they’re doing. I’m sticking with Krones,” he says. And he has even more plans: he intends to build a second plant in Arbegona for bottling the local gin Areky and soft drinks, plus another plant in the north of Ethiopia. Biruk Haile Shemer’s verdict is this: “There’s a lot to do in Ethiopia. The aluminium business is my daily bread. But after all people are always going to need something to drink.”

Klaus Jäger
Krones AG
Tel. +49 9401 70-4030

