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Stahl Gerlafingen Benefits from Improved Production Performance after Wire Rod Mill Upgrade

- **New laying head significantly reduces heavy vibrations, ensuring no more costly unexpected shutdowns**
- **Increases Stahl Gerlafingen's production utilization by improving yield through reduced conveyor stops and maintenance downtime**
- **Tension monitoring system improves front-end orientation for more uniform coil packages**

Primetals Technologies recently received the final acceptance certificate (FAC) for an upgrade to AFV Beltrame Stahl Gerlafingen's wire rod mill in Gerlafingen, a city in the canton of Solothurn, located in the north-western part of Switzerland. The upgrade included an intelligent pinch roll and laying head utilizing electrical motors and drives, as well as an automation system. The mill's wire rod outlet will produce 600,000 tons per year of 6 – 20 millimeter quenched rebar and 5.5 – 20 millimeter low carbon wire rod.

Stahl Gerlafingen's previous laying head caused multiple issues, including excessive vibration, unplanned shutdowns, poor front-end orientation, and uneven coil packages. To address these challenges, Stahl Gerlafingen contracted Primetals Technologies, whose 6th-generation laying head provided the solution.

An Updated Laying Head

The new laying head technology incorporates an integral segmented deflector plate for front- and tail-end control, as well as a rugged gearbox with roller bearings. This new generation's one-piece fabrication design reduces manufacturing time and second harmonics. The improved pipe path and optimized center of gravity (CG) position reduce vibrations and extend pipe path lifetime.

The new laying head also includes a tension monitoring system that uses laser speed gauges to measure product movement and position. The new solution immediately improved front-end orientation once installed and running. This effectively eliminated vibrations, significantly reduced unplanned mill stops, and increased production.

Christiane Hess, Technical Project Manager for Stahl Gerlafingen, commented: "Thanks to the new screw technology, both the start and end of the coil are now placed significantly more precisely and

stably in the coil formation area. Additionally, the new equipment allows for higher production speeds and a more powerful drive mechanism, improving overall process stability and product quality.”

Real-Time Product Monitoring

The tension monitoring control system measures how fast the product moves through the laying head, and its position. Integrated with the mill's human-machine interface (HMI), it allows operators a unique opportunity to monitor production in real-time and make informed, data-driven decisions.

Producing an average of over 700,000 tons of low-CO₂ steel, Stahl Gerlafingen is the largest producer of recycled steel in Switzerland. Founded over 200 years ago in 1823, the company supplies steel bars and beams and is part of the AFV Beltrame Group.



8-millimeter wire rod exiting laying head onto the cooling conveyor at Stahl Gerlafingen's new wire rod mill, supplied by Primetals Technologies.



Close-up of 8-millimeter wire rod exiting laying head onto the cooling conveyor at Stahl Gerlafingen's new wire rod mill, supplied by Primetals Technologies.

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