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20 YEARS OF PLATFORM BASKET

Italian aerial work platform manufacturer Platform Basket marks two significant anniversaries this year. TMC, the founding company of the Platform Basket Group established in 1974 by the Scillia family, reaches 50 years in business, while Platform Basket itself completes 20 years under the group's ownership. Vertikal's Imogen Campion visited Platform Basket to find out more...

Platform Basket was founded in October 2005 following the Scillia family's acquisition of Basket, previously a division of Italmec. Basket had manufactured spider lifts and self-propelled boom lifts marketed under the Sel brand - including the Sel 13/7, Sel16/7.5, Sel19/10 and Sel 22/13 - but had suffered reputational and financial problems following a number of incidents.

The Scillia family already owned TMC, a machining and fabrication supplier dating back to around 1945 that manufactured steel components for local equipment producers including Linde forklifts, Dieci telehandlers and loader cranes from Amco Veba, PM and F.lli Ferrari. They decided to acquire Basket to invest in their own product range for Italian and worldwide markets.

Initially attempting to run both companies simultaneously, the family realised Platform Basket required significant attention to bring it back to its former glory. So, in March 2006, they hired Carlo Molesini, who had previously spent 23 years with loader crane company Ferrari. Looking back at the history in 2015, Molesini said: "The Scillia family contacted me and some other people to help clean up the problems with the business they had acquired and restart an activity that they considered to be well worthwhile."

During the visit marketing manager Francesca Mora and export manager Enrico Marighella outlined the company's history and future plans, including discussions about economic conditions and expansion strategies.

The company's current portfolio includes articulated self-propelled road rail boom lifts for railway maintenance, mast booms and mast lifts

under the Heron brand name, mast boom type self-propelled cranes introduced in 2022 under the Elma name, and its classic spider lifts with working heights ranging from 12 to 54 metres, with the largest unit, the 54T, introduced in 2023. The company is currently producing two units a month of this behemoth with most being purchased by rental companies or telecommunication contractors.

"When we moved into the 40 metre plus spider lift market things become complicated due to the sensors, dynamics, performance and power," said Marighella. "It requires a lot of research and work to produce a reliable, trustworthy machine of



Carlo Molesini



(L-R) Theenusaa Kanakeswaran, Imogen Campion and Enrico Marighella



The 18 metre 18.90 spider

this size and height. With the 54T, that was even more complicated as it is not only an aerial work platform, but also a crane and therefore needs very specific attention to every single detail."

Despite the size of the 54T, the company says it has a focus on compactness with many spider models able to pass through standard doorways whilst still being able to work at up to 30 metres.

ECO LIFTS

Platform Basket was among the first manufacturers to develop the electric spider lift and has been moving steadily towards zero emissions since introducing its first machine, the 18 metre 18.90 model in 2012. This was followed by the 22 metre 22.10, and now, the entirety of the company's product line - including its Elma mini cranes and road rail machines - all have the capacity to be electrified.

"Whether through integrating lithium battery packs, refining remote diagnostics, or improving ease of transport and setup, Platform Basket is committed to continuous innovation without sacrificing quality or safety," said Mora.

ROAD RAIL BOOMS

The company has been quietly building boom lifts for the railway maintenance market since 2008, now producing 100 units annually. The UK, Germany and France are the largest consumers, with sales equally distributed between the three countries. Earlier this year distributor



The handover (L-R) Carlo Molesini of Platform Basket with Benjamin Döscher of Meykratec along with Charly Kunze and Florian Kunze-Scheffler

Kunze delivered its 100th Platform Basket road rail platform - a 41ft RR14 EVO3-400 - to rental company Meykratec Hebeteknik. The milestone delivery marks a decade of dealership with Kunze selling approximately 300 Platform Basket units annually.

According to Kunze, spider lifts represent its most popular Platform Basket product, followed by road rail equipment and then Elma mini cranes which it began distributing in May and is still in the early stages. The company has established itself as the exclusive Platform Basket distributor for Germany and Austria, offering both sales and rental services for rail mounted platforms with working heights ranging from nine to 19 metres.

Kunze chief executive Charly Kunze said: "We are proud to have a long standing, very good sales partnership with the third largest crawler manufacturer in the world - Platform Basket - and look forward to many more productive years."

The manufacturers' road rail platforms are not just standard products with road rail gear attached, they are designed from the ground up for the rail industry to carry out overhead line maintenance, infrastructure applications and include hydraulic tilting superstructures for working on banked cambers. The models offer working heights from 9.5 to 18.7 metres and meet the toughest and most stringent regulations of railway operators worldwide, while meeting the need for minimal track possession times and top level reliability.

When it comes to the UK market, Promax Access have been distributing since 1999, initially as dealer for Basket until Platform Basket came into being in 2005. The company also performs well in the road rail boom market due to its specialist knowledge in the area and occasionally distributes to other countries. Promax says that both the spider and railroad products are equally important parts of the business, offering product diversity from a single manufacturer.

Promax company owner, Shaun Day said: "Platform Basket operates with the highest levels of integrity, which is incredibly important to our company's operating ethics. Due to significant investment and continuous innovation over many years, Platform Basket has transformed into a first class manufacturer of industry leading products."



Shaun Day

The company has quietly carved out a major share of this specialised market for itself and is almost certainly the leader. However, it is not alone in this market, as this year saw a new entrant in the form of Turkish manufacturer Mote



A rail road boom being tested at the company's facility



A rail road boom in production



Two 43 metre 43T spiders ready to be shipped



An MCX 110 Elma mini crane in production



Mote Lift's ABL16RR road rail boom lift

Lift, a subsidiary of Hisarlar and a well-established rail industry fabricator and supplier in Turkey.

Since launching the Elma crane line in 2023, the company has reported strong demand for what is a relatively niche market with few competitors. The range already includes six models from the 1.1 tonne PCR10 up to the 11 tonne MCX110. Marighella said: "We are not looking to produce machines or products that are mass produced, it doesn't make sense for us. Due to our size, we're not looking to compete with the big guys, we look for a gap in the market and target it."

All manufacturing takes place at Platform Basket's only facility in Poviglio, approximately an hour South East of Milan, with everything made in-house except for painting, which is outsourced to a third party. Current lead times are about 90 days depending on the product. The facility opened in 2015 is now a bustling operation with 230 employees, 185 of them on the shop floor. The site houses five buildings where different manufacturing processes take place, alongside three research and development departments focusing on various sections and machines.

SUPPLY CHAIN ACQUISITIONS

To consolidate operations, Platform Basket acquired research and development specialist Qubiemme Tecnologie (QBM) in 2017 which focuses on electrical installation and electronic systems within the platforms, as well as steel company Lamiere Speciali Emiliane (LSE) last year. These acquisitions have helped bring all manufacturing processes in house.

"Continually developing our technology and improving our in-house processes is paramount to us, it is in our DNA to keep moving forwards and stay ahead of the game. Machinery nowadays has 50 percent electric components, so that's the reason we acquired QBM, to increase the efficiency and performance of our machines," said Marighella.

The company has recently purchased 3,500 square metres of additional land adjacent to its facility to construct more workshops, which the company

says will increase production capacity from 1,200 to between 1,600 and 1,700 units annually. This represents significant growth from its 10th anniversary when it was producing 300 lifts per year with revenues of €16 million.

Platform Basket has around 15 dealers worldwide making approximately half of its sales in Europe, with Germany representing a significant proportion. North America accounts for 30 percent while also being the largest consumer of spider lifts. The company has also recently opened a new service and support facility in Toronto, South West Canada to support its customers in the nearby regions. Australia accounts for eight percent of sales, Asia seven percent, India and UAE combined account for five percent of sales. The company claims it has 6,000 units in operation globally, with 800 active customers. Shipments to the US have also begun again with the customer bearing the brunt of the tariffs, but with very few US based spider manufacturers, the picture remains positive for the company.

The company emphasised its commitment to recruiting and developing staff, supporting young employees from university or college through apprenticeships and training courses. "We are preparing for the future of this company, we are thinking ahead and planning for it. We invest a lot in our legacy and mentoring the young generation is very important to us."

Looking ahead, Platform Basket has indicated there will be more new products including a 'surprise' during its 20th anniversary celebrations scheduled for October 24th. ■



A 27 metre 27.14 spider

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