

Hovione increases production capacity while looking forward to its tenth year in Cork



Hovione employees celebrating the company’s great cultural diversity among the workforce at the Cork facility on its International Day.

Helen Kelleher

2019 will be a very significant year for Hovione the contract pharmaceutical manufacturing company which helps bring new and off-patent drugs to market celebrates 10 years Irish-side.

Hovione which took over Pfizer’s former Loughbeg site in Ringaskiddy in 2009 has seen rapid growth over the last 10 years.

The company employs over 200 people in Cork and hundreds more at its other three sites spread over three continents with facilities in Lisbon (Portugal), Macau (China), New Jersey (USA).

Hovione has over 55 years of experience in the development and compliant manufacture of Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients and Drug Product Intermediates.

The Cork plant plays a significant and strategic role within the Hovione network and that was certainly proven earlier this year when Hovione expanded its production capacity.

Having recommissioned a third production building at their site in Ringaskiddy Hovione went into production at this building in May of this year.

“This is the first time in Cork’s history that all three buildings have been running at the same time”, said General Manager Paul Downing who said it is an exciting time in the company’s history as

Hovione Cork now have extensive manufacturing capacity with two Active Pharmaceutical Ingredient facilities alongside a Drug Product Intermediate facility that houses the largest, commercial pharmaceutical spray dryer in operation.

Dr Downing said he is optimistic about the future.

2019 he said is going to be a really big year for Hovione Worldwide as it celebrates its 60th Anniversary. The company was founded by Ivan Villax with his wife Diane Villax in Lisbon in Portugal in 1959.

“We have a very ambitious plan to be the Number 1 innovative, integrated pharmaceutical solution provider to the global pharmaceutical industry by 2028,” said Dr Downing. “Our mission is to passionately turn any challenge into a solution by collaboration with our partners to develop great medicines. That is a company corporate goal so that requires all our facilities to grow and expand so this expansion plan is across the whole Hovione network including Lisbon, New Jersey, Macau and also obviously Cork.

“In short we give our customers what they cannot find elsewhere”, says Dr. Downing, who explains that the company’s customers come from the sectors of biotechnology, medium, speciality and large pharmaceuticals as well as generics pharmaceuticals.

“Hovione has a unique value proposition. We have more than 15 years of experience in pharmaceutical spray drying and have produced hundreds of batches for clinical trials and commercial supplies.

“We have a very diverse workforce. We currently have 15 nationalities onsite here in Cork. Hovione is a fast, challenging dynamic environment and there are great opportunities for people with all skill sets at whatever age.

“Because the market demands different products you can work on multiple products and multiple projects at the same time. That gives people a diversity of experience. We like to have a balance between promoting from within and recruiting from outside so therefore if someone has the desire to move within the organisation these opportunities arise.”

Hovione is constantly developing its talent pool and is a big supporter of and encourages apprenticeships for young people where they get an opportunity to gain very substantial and important skills allowing them to take up roles as electricians, fitters, quality control analysts, instrument technicians as well as automation technicians.

The Apprenticeship programme not only provides participants with the necessary technical and professional skills, it also provides valuable teamwork experience.

Valuable teamwork experience

“What we do find is that people can have very strong technical and academic skills but their team collaboration skills require us to invest in further training. These skills would be automatically instilled in participants in the Apprenticeships programmes. In complex and large organisations like ourselves the interpersonal skills and an ability to work in small teams is important.”

Hovione works with Skillsnet and other local academic institutions to help build capabilities that can take advantage of the many career opportunities available.

“We do College site tours and Master student placements. We work with the IDA on the IBEC EOP Programme which sees graduates spend six months with us and six months with our sister facility in Portugal mostly working



Inside the Hovione facility at Ringaskiddy, Co Cork.



Hovione is one of 43 leading companies in Ireland to have made a dedicated pledge to significantly reduce their carbon emissions during a summit organised by the Business in the Community Ireland (BITCI), the national network for sustainability. Pictured were Paul Downing, General Manager, Hovione; Maarten Schuurman, MD, Heineken Ireland; Bernard Sheridan, Corporate Affairs Director, Central Bank of Ireland; and Shay Walsh, MD, BT.

as process engineers or QC analysts. We hope these graduates will come and join us in our new process in Cork in 2019.

“We continue to work with the Portuguese Postdoctoral Graduate Placement Programme and with the Cork Education Training Board and this year we supported the IBEC Laboratory Apprenticeship Programme — we have the first two apprentices joining from that initiative this January in collaboration with CIT so we look forward to that as it has been a couple of years in the making.”

Overall, Hovione’s steadfast growth is the result of an integrated synergy that allows the company to serve both the global markets and also to respond to specific customer demands when necessary.

The company has a solid legacy of Corporate Social Responsibility — last year Hovione became a Certified B Corp – becoming the first facility in Ireland to have received this certification.

The company’s ‘Safety First, Quality Always’ culture is also something staff are very proud of - “we nurture it each day so that we do not take it for granted”.

“In the coming years we will continue to invest in additional capability and hire additional team members, launch and validate more new products”, says Dr Downing, who points out that the

company is an active member of Biopharmachem Ireland, Cork Chamber as well as Business in the Community Ireland.

Hovione sponsors and supports local community initiatives as well as establishing crucial links with the academic and training institutions through its support of STEM — initiatives to encourage take-up of subjects such as science, technology, engineering and mathematics — as well as CIT Student placements and the Cork Training Centre.

Just last week, Hovione won the Corporate Citizen Responsibility Business in Community Ireland Mark.

Carbon footprint commitment

“We are one of 40 leading companies who have signed up to significantly reduce their carbon emissions between now and 2030”.

The pledge was made at a summit organised in Dublin last week by Business in the Community in Ireland, which describes itself as a network for sustainability.

“We are the first contact manufacturing organisation to win that award,” said Dr Downing. “We see that things like corporate social responsibility, being ethical in the workplace and within the community, reducing our carbon footprint are all important very important issues going forward.”



Hovione employees participating in ‘Ivan Villax Day’, held on the birth date of company founder, Ivan Villax, father to Hovione’s current CEO. On this day across all our sites internationally, employees were encouraged to volunteer to participate in a charity event. In Cork, volunteers cleaned up the beach area fronting onto the Hovione site, where staff also hosted a ‘bring and buy’ cake sale for charity.

Hovione committed to engaging with its local communities

Hovione holds annual Corporate social responsibility days and each year a particular organisation is chosen.

This year, the company supported SIMON Community — fundraising and giving practical support. Every Christmas, the company also facilitates food and gift appeals for the St Vincent de Paul Society.

Dr Paul Downing said: “We are the first Chemical /Pharmaceutical Company integrating this innovative community of companies that use the power of business to solve social and environmental problems. As a Certified B Corporation we want to contribute to redefine success in business meeting the highest standards of social and environmental performance, setting out Team Members for success and personal satisfaction and aspiring to use the power of markets to solve social and environmental problems.

“This is a global movement of people using business as a force for good with a vision that one day all companies compete not only to be the best in the world but the Best for the World”.

As well as expansion in Cork Hovione is completing by the end of 2018 the qualification of its continuous tableting line at New Jersey (USA). The capacity expansion program started in 2016 and will continue in the coming five years. Hovione has relocated its development services to a new centre with 7,000 m2 in Lisbon —



Several Hovione employees attended an IWish event in Cork City Hall, hosted by Biopharmachem Ireland to encourage teenage girls in transition year to consider career opportunities in Science.

fully equipped with the most recent tools to handle potent and highly potent compounds.

The Loures site expanded its drug substance reaction vessel capacity with a small-scale production area and a new pilot plant. The company installed more spray drying capacity at the site and started the operation of a new drug product centre equipped with oral dosage form as well as inhalation manufacturing capabilities. In New Jersey, Hovione has doubled the size of its development and manufacturing operations.

The decision to expand follows growing customer demand since Hovione started offering end-to-end solutions from drug substance to drug product from the Loures site in 2017.

Hovione increased production capacity in oral dosage forms in Portugal to strengthen their integrated offering. New commercial scale equipment for blending, tableting and coating to complement existing development small scale equipment. This ‘One Site Shop’ allows customers to streamline their supply chain, reduce time to market and benefit from seamless project management. This increase in capacity helps Hovione customers to consistently bring products to market faster.

Paul looks forward to a very exciting year ahead. All these successes here at home he says would not have been possible without the continued support of the local businesses, IDA, Biopharmachem Ireland and the staff working at the Cork facility.