

Pioneering sustainable hygiene: WEPA Professional UK leads the way

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Speaking exclusively to FM Director's Claire Middleton at the London Cleaning Show, Khalid Saifullah, Managing Director of [WEPA Professional UK](#), discusses the company's sustainability-focused transformation and groundbreaking new product launches.

Since WEPA's acquisition of Star Tissue UK, Khalid Saifullah has been instrumental in redefining the company's strategic direction, product portfolio and market positioning. As Managing Director of WEPA Professional UK, his focus over the past 18 months has been clear: to establish the business as the undisputed leader in sustainable hygiene solutions.

"My role has been to help develop the product portfolio for the UK division, integrate the services that we offer with WEPA as a whole, and really develop the growth strategy for the UK going forward," explains Saifullah. "We've been focusing ourselves on being the leaders of sustainable hygiene - that's where our key strength is, our USP."

This strategic evolution culminated in a major launch at the London Cleaning Show, which Saifullah describes as "a very important day" that the team had been working towards for months. The event marked WEPA Professional UK's official unveiling of three significant new developments that signal its commitment to sustainability and innovation.

Revolutionary grass fibre technology

The most exciting announcement is Satino Green Grow - the industry's first tissue and towel cleaning paper products made from miscanthus grass fibre.

“This is the big one for me,” Saifullah states with evident pride. “It’s a champagne-coloured paper made from miscanthus grass that is locally sourced from Europe and the UK.”

Unlike alternatives such as bamboo, which is primarily imported from China with a significant carbon footprint, miscanthus grass offers remarkable sustainability credentials. “You can harvest it 20-30 times a year,” Saifullah explains. “It’s not like bamboo which is brought over from China with a very heavy carbon footprint.”

The resulting product is not just environmentally superior but offers exceptional performance. The soft, champagne-coloured paper compares favourably with virgin fibre products and, according to Saifullah, is “probably a lot softer” than many alternatives.

Sustainable dispensers with longevity built-in

The second element of WEPA’s strategic launch is the Satino Hygienic Dispenser series, designed with sustainability as a core principle.

“We’ve designed a whole new set of dispenser ranges with sustainability in mind,” Saifullah explains. “The dispensers are made from 100% recycled materials – especially the black ones – and the design principle is very much that once you’ve bought the dispenser, you keep it for life.”

This philosophy extends to the product’s maintenance, with every component being replaceable. “Every part is disposable, so it’s not like if it’s broken you throw it away. You can get build little parts to it – it’s easily functional.”

Brand consolidation

The third strategic move involves consolidating the company’s product range under the Satino brand, moving away from the previous Serif brand. This transition, scheduled to complete over the next two to three months, will see the UK market increasingly recognise Satino products across the professional hygiene sector.

“We will now be fully moving over the next two to three months, rebranding into Satino,” Saifullah confirms. “So the UK will now start to see Satino products across the professional hygiene sector.”

The Satino range consists of four product families: Satino Highline, Satino High Side, Satino Green Grow, and Satino Pure Soft, alongside their other brands Place ‘N’ Active.

Navigating the sustainability landscape

For Saifullah, true sustainability requires cutting through the confusion and greenwashing that often clouds the marketplace. “Sustainability means a lot of different things to a lot of people. There’s a lot of confusion, and there’s a lot of marketing and greenwashing,” he observes. “For us, we want to be very transparent and present a very simple message to the customer.”

This transparency extends to acknowledging the environmental implications of different material choices. Saifullah is candid about the limitations of options like bamboo: “Bamboo has its benefits, but if you’re transporting bamboo from China here, there’s a lot of carbon [impact from] 8,000 miles. And also, you’re damaging an environmental habitat, particularly with pandas.”

WEPA's approach offers differentiated sustainability options to meet varying customer requirements. "If you're price conscious, you'll go with 100% recycled. But if you want the best sustainable products in the market, you'll go for the grass fibre," Saifullah explains.

The company's Pure Soft range, made from 100% recycled cardboard, represents another innovative solution. As Saifullah points out, "The packaging industry is growing and waste paper is becoming less in the copier side. So good quality waste paper is becoming less and less as people are moving more to paper-free, whilst using Amazon and packaging growing a lot more."

This reality makes recycling cardboard increasingly important, despite the challenges involved. "It makes a lot more sense investing in being able to recycle cardboard – and cardboard has been recycled many times before, so we're trying to be able to recycle a product that is very hard to recycle, which we've done very well with the Pure Soft range."

First-mover advantage

As the first company to bring grass fibre tissue products to market, WEPA Professional UK is enjoying a significant competitive advantage. When asked if competitors will be able to replicate their innovation, Saifullah is confident in their lead: "Not immediately. I think big companies will probably at some point start looking at it, but it's not an easy one to start."

The technical expertise and manufacturing capabilities required represent significant barriers to entry. "We were fortunate that we've been able to convert. We had a testing factory as well, so because our focus is on sustainability, we've been looking at alternative fibres. I think whoever copies will take at least three or four years to develop the infrastructure and the mill to produce it."

Looking ahead

The immediate future looks bright for WEPA Professional UK as the company continues to strengthen its position in the market. "From what we've developed, I think there will be a lot of people coming to see us. We've kept a lot of stuff under the radar, and today we can say 'come down and we'll show you what we're going to do,'" Saifullah enthuses.

With millions of pounds being invested in further developing grass fibre production, the company is clearly committed to its sustainability leadership position for the long term. "I think going forward in the next few years, we'll be developing it further and further," Saifullah confirms.

As customers increasingly seek genuinely sustainable solutions, WEPA Professional UK's transparent approach and innovative product range place it in an enviable market position – offering choices that are both environmentally responsible and commercially viable for facilities management professionals across the sector.