

Protabaco: Improving spares availability

In tobacco manufacturing, efficiency is measured not only by production speed, but by how effectively operations manage supply constraints. While machinery operates continuously, sourcing spare parts remains one of the most significant variables affecting cost, planning, and uptime.

Protabaco S.R.L., based in the Dominican Republic, was established in 2017 as part of a broader tobacco-related operation, initially focused on trading activities within the industry. As the company developed, a clear gap in the local market became evident: limited access to critical spare parts within commercially viable lead times. This led to a strategic shift in focus toward machinery support and spare parts supply.

In 2019, Protabaco strengthened this direction by establishing a strategic partnership with a Swiss industry partner, integrating decades of European technical expertise directly into its parts evaluation and quality assurance processes. This combination of engineering know-how and Caribbean-based logistics has allowed Protabaco to develop a model focused on availability, responsiveness, and alignment with industry standards.

What began as a local response quickly revealed a broader reality. Across multiple regions, manufacturers face similar challenges – extended lead times, restricted availability, and limited flexibility when sourcing components for widely used machinery platforms.

“Most factories already know what they need. The real question is whether they can source it faster and more competitively – and that is where we focus,” says Ramon Emilio Peralta, Director of Operations at Protabaco.

A COMPETITIVE SOURCING MODEL

In high-speed manufacturing environments – particularly those operating platforms such as Hauni, Molins, and similar systems – production continuity depends not only on maintenance, but on sourcing efficiency.

Traditional procurement channels remain essential, but they are often constrained by extended lead times, limited flexibility in availability, and standardised pricing structures.

As a result, manufacturers are increasingly incorporating alternative sourcing partners to improve responsiveness and cost competitiveness. Protabaco fits within this structure – not as a replacement for existing suppliers, but as a parallel option within the sourcing process, particularly in RFQ-driven scenarios. Within this framework, Protabaco positions itself as a competitive sourcing partner capable of being evaluated alongside OEM suppliers. By offering OEM-comparable quality, competitive pricing, and, in many cases, improved lead times supported by available stock; the company enables procurement teams to make more balanced and efficient sourcing decisions.

LOGISTICS ADVANTAGE

Operating from the Dominican Republic’s established free-zone logistics hubs, Protabaco benefits from a location that has become a key node for manufacturing activity across the Western Hemisphere.

The country’s strong logistical connectivity enables faster movement of goods and significantly reduced transit times compared to traditional intercontinental supply routes. In many cases, Protabaco can supply required components within 24–48 hours, providing a measurable advantage in both urgent procurement situations and routine inventory planning.

“Proximity creates flexibility,” Peralta explains. “When lead times are reduced, sourcing becomes more competitive – not just faster, but more efficient overall.”



Photo: Protabaco

Ramon Emilio Peralta, Director of Operations at Protabaco

STOCK-FIRST AVAILABILITY

One of the main constraints in spare parts sourcing is not demand, but timing. Components may be available globally, but not within the timeframe required by the operation. Protabaco addresses this through a stock-oriented approach focused on components widely used across the industry, particularly in high-demand and legacy systems. To ensure operational readiness, Protabaco's in-house technical team subjects incoming inventory to rigorous quality verification before components are released into available stock. This enables manufacturers to access parts within shorter timeframes while maintaining full alignment with required specifications and operational performance standards. "Our role in this industry is to improve access to critical components so that sourcing decisions are not limited by time," says Peralta.

CORE AREAS OF SUPPORT

Protabaco provides support to tobacco manufacturers through:

- Prompt supply of spare parts from available stock
- Sourcing of obsolete and hard-to-find mechanical components
- Local representation and availability of selected OEM-grade components, including exclusive partnerships with manufacturers such as Arkote and Esband for the Dominican Republic market.

By aligning with specialised manufacturers such as Arkote and Esband, Protabaco ensures that localised availability is supported by OEM-grade performance standards recognised across the industry. This balance of regional distribution and global technical sourcing enables both local operations and international clients to benefit from the same level of engineering reliability. These services are designed to complement existing supplier networks, offering procurement teams additional flexibility when evaluating availability, pricing, and delivery timelines.

IN PRACTICE

The value of improved sourcing flexibility is most evident in day-to-day operations. In one case, a cigarette production line operating on a high-speed platform experienced a stoppage caused by a failed control card in an older-generation system. The required component carried an extended lead time through conventional sourcing channels. By supplying a compatible OEM replacement within a short timeframe, the line was restored after only a few shifts – avoiding a prolonged disruption on a high-output line where machine downtime quickly compounds into significant capital losses and enabling the operation to maintain planned output. More importantly, situations like this demonstrate that when alternative sourcing options are available, operational risk is reduced and planning becomes more reliable.

PROCUREMENT STRATEGIES EVOLVE

As the tobacco industry continues to adapt to cost pressures and shift production geographies, sourcing strategies are evolving accordingly. Manufacturers are placing increasing emphasis on lead time optimisation, supplier diversification, and access to reliable alternatives within their procurement processes. Rather than relying on a single source, many operations are expanding their supplier base to improve resilience and competitiveness. "We are often included as an additional option," Peralta notes. "Our team handles technical inquiries directly, giving procurement managers a clear, real-time view of availability and pricing."

LOOKING AHEAD

While unplanned failures highlight the importance of availability, the long-term value lies in improving everyday sourcing decisions. By participating in RFQ processes and ongoing procurement activity, Protabaco enables manufacturers to evaluate alternatives that may offer improved lead times or cost efficiency – particularly in regions where logistics plays a decisive role. This approach ensures that Protabaco is considered not only in exceptional situations, but as part of standard procurement evaluations where performance, cost, and timing are measured together.

TJI

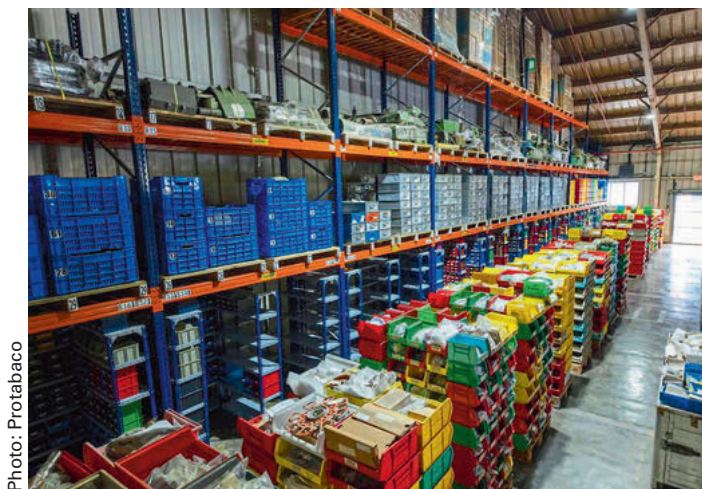


Photo: Protabaco

Situated in the Dominican Republic, Protabaco's warehouse ensures rapid spare parts distribution, bolstering the efficiency of tobacco manufacturing operations

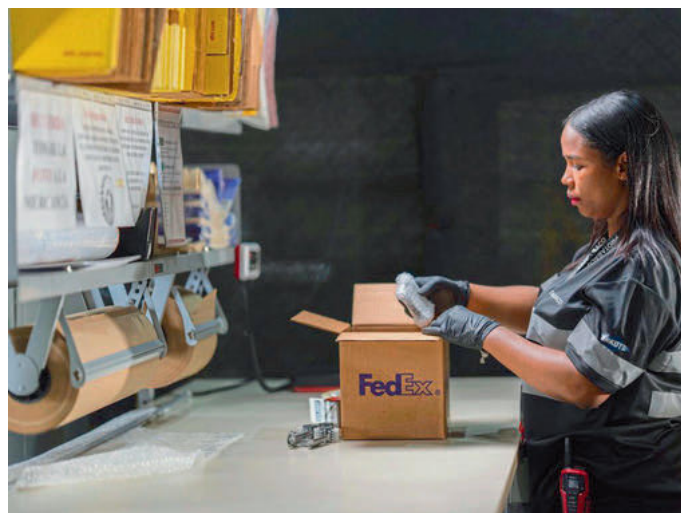


Photo: Protabaco

Protabaco's adept handling of spare parts packaging underscores its role in enhancing supply chain agility within the tobacco sector