

AAF envisages high growth in air filtration market in coming years

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American Air Filter (AAF), an air filtration company, holds a dominant position in the pharmaceutical industry for its cleanroom range of products and is recognised globally for its quality, expertise and innovation in air filtration. The company has led the industry for 100 years and is still dominating the air filtration industry with a turnover of over 150 crores in this region. Shailesh Nigam, Head – Operations (India, Sri Lanka, East Africa) Company: AAF India, reveals more about the new launches and the future of the air filter market in India



How do you foresee the growth of the air filter market in the APAC region given that China and India are claimed to be the most polluted nations in the world?

Due to the heavy industrialisation and large population, India and China have also become the most polluted countries. Growing pollution has always been a concern in both countries but the prevailing pandemic situation has generated awareness among the institution, corporates, industries and common public etc. about the quality of the air they breathe. This has led to an increased focus on indoor air quality (IAQ).

Being the industry leader in air filtration, we can witness the rise in demand for air purification products in India. As the term IAQ has become a topic of discussion people are realising the importance of clean air in conditioned space and with the information available on the Internet they are aware of companies/ service providers who are stressing the same. But at the same time, the lack of regulations makes people/organisations fall for products that most of the time may not solve their IAQ issues.

We have a stronghold in the pharma segment. Moreover, it's FDA guidelines which are to be strictly followed by all the pharmaceutical companies and AAF becomes their first choice for filtration products because we believe in world-class quality with strong service backup. AAF products' performance conforms to set guidelines, resulting in higher efficiency and long life of the filters. Apart from the pharma industry, there is a huge market for air filtration products and solutions but due to the lack of proper regulatory guidelines, there are multiple players who offer ESPs / UV Lamp etc. as clean air solutions.

The automotive sector, airports, oil and gas, paper and pulp, microelectronics, data centres are a few of the non-pharma segments which are good prospects for IAQ but the lack of regulations do not compel the end-users to adopt a suitable IAQ solution.

American Air Filter (AAF) offers the most suitable clean air solution across industries and with the outspread of COVID around the globe, we have got an opportunity to serve several segments with our air filters, purifiers etc. Products like PurAir & AstroPure (HEPA clubbed with UV light and chemical filters) have delivered results and proved their performance by reducing the risks of COVID-19 in various indoor premises where they were previously more susceptible to infections. This equipment is well structured with the combination of pre and chemical filters at the first phase, followed by high-efficiency HEPA filters ensuring 99.995 per cent of clean air in any given space.

I believe this is high time when government authorities / regulatory bodies should bring in the regulations to make the IAQ mandatory to ensure that human being is not exposed to threats of polluted air. These regulations shall ensure that the institution, corporates, industries etc. follow the IAQ norms and even the filter manufacturers also comply with the minimum required quality standards.

Recently there has been news of severe pollution in areas of Delhi-NCR. How do you plan to foray into the Delhi-NCR market with your products? Any new products in the offing?

The pollution level in the indoor air can be up to five times higher than in outdoor air. People spend more than 90 per cent of their time indoors, be it the comforts of home or workplace. IAQ is strongly connected to health and wellbeing. Breathable air that's free of health-threatening pollutants can lead to a higher quality of life, lower risk of respiratory illnesses, and a reduced risk of various chronic conditions. We at AAF have various ways to reach out to the target audience and to educate them about IAQ & its importance.

We closely work with consultants and other stakeholders from various industries and educate them on our products and services by conducting seminars/ webinars regularly. We are also in touch with many educational institutes, schools, and universities wherein we sensitise them on the difference between indoor and outdoor quality and its impact and how can proper products help in certain conditions.

AAF's consultative approach is to conduct a thorough air filtration audit, where we analyse the customer's current state. Once the air filtration audit process is done, we present the detailed benchmark data, as well as a life cycle cost report and we propose the most suitable solution for IAQ improvement for the specific application.

Considering Delhi-NCR like pollution level where outdoor as well as indoor air both are to be treated and AAF has taken a lead in coming out with a suitable solution which is as under:

AstroPure: AAF launched AstroPure Air Purification System which comes with an airflow capacity range of 250 CFM to 2000 CFM. This air purification system showed effective filtration against the SARS-CoV-2 virus. AstroPure is equipped with high-efficiency 2-stage filtration and broad-spectrum germicidal UV light which can effectively kill bacteria and viruses by destroying the molecular bonds that hold their DNA together.

PurAir 350C: PurAir 350C is a quick ceiling mounted air purification unit. It is specifically designed to remove indoor fine particles such as PM2.5, PM1 and bacteria and viruses. PurAir 350C also comes with a germicidal UV light feature to inactivate viral, bacterial, and fungal organisms. Our ceiling mounted air purification unit is suitable for all kinds of commercial indoor environments such as hospitals, schools, airports, financial institutions, hotels, and shopping malls.

What will be American Air Filter (AAF)'s latest offerings in the pharma sector?

Globalisation, ageing population, and economic shifts are transforming the pharmaceutical landscape. New medical needs and therapeutic areas are emerging that will put more pressure on innovation, productivity, and time-to-market. All these developments shed a new perspective on the role of air filtration.

Both regulatory authorities and the pharma industry itself puts great emphasis on manufacturing pharma products using practices and processes that ensure high levels of quality and safety built into every step. Regulatory requirements emphasise good practices for controlling air quality and safety, from drug development to distribution: The key to good cleanroom design is where the air is brought in (supply) and taken out (exhaust). Air purity levels are needed because of the direct effect airborne contamination has on the quality of pharma products. HEPA filters were initially designed specifically for the unique requirements and challenges of the aseptic pharma manufacturing industry. High-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filters are used in pharma manufacturing. These filters are available in a variety of efficiencies from 99.97 per cent tested on 0.3 µm particles to 99.9995 per cent and higher tested on 0.1 to 0.1 µm particles. HEPA filter media used in industry is

fibreglass.

AAF's ePTFE Filtration media for HEPA is designed specifically to address the unique requirement and challenges of the pharma industry. Patent-pending ePTFE media has proven durability, polyalphaolefin (PAO) compatibility, high particulate filtration efficiency, and the lowest pressure drop to meet the demands of pharmaceutical manufacturing.

Independent tests have shown that filters with ePTFE Filtration Technology have superior mechanical strength over filters with traditional fibreglass media. This superior durability and tensile strength is 84 times the pleated strength of fibreglass. With twice the lifespan, costly change-outs and plant shutdowns are cut in half, reducing the maintenance costs and increasing plant production.

With which healthcare organisations are you tied up in India?

As an organisation, we have tied up with Narayana Institute of Cardiac Science and Mazumdar Shaw Medical Centre Bangalore, in house health checkup facilities, blood donation, RT PCR tests, covid vaccination, health check-up, OPD consultation, Diagnostics procedures for all our employees and their family members.

Apart from the above corporate tie-up, AAF supported the healthcare sector by offering clean air solutions to fight the COVID pandemic. We have served several healthcare organisations, hospitals, pharma, clinics, and testing labs by offering high purity filtration solutions. AAF's customised products helped many of the life science facilities such as Serum, Biocon, Syngene, Dr Reddy's, Navesta Pharmaceuticals, Sun pharma in their cleanrooms, used in the manufacturing of vaccines, medicines etc.

How has been the business grown in India and neighbouring countries and what will be your focus for the next five years?

The indoor air quality of non-residential urban buildings in India is a matter of concern, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic. The prevailing pandemic has revealed the need for high-quality air filtration systems. The demand AAF faced increased manifold as our clients wanted better air quality to stay safe from infections. The products previously touted/categorised as 'good to have' now became "must-have" by our clients.

AAF envisages high growth in the air filtration market in the coming years. Our market share in pharma has always been strong, and with the advanced ePTFE technology we are confident of consolidating our position in the pharma and reaching out to several other sectors. The Indian manufacturing and industrial sector roughly contribute around 19-23 per cent to GDP and with our full range of filtration product and solutions in sectors like F&B, Hospitality, Healthcare, Microelectronics, data centre, oil and gas etc. we are prepared to extend our services to every such sector who are keen to improve their IAQ for a better future. We are relentlessly working on our research and development and advancing product portfolio by localising products which we were earlier imported. With these activities and a very clear roadmap, AAF aims to grow steadily in the filtration market and wishes to multiply its current business by four to five times in the next five years.

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