

Exclusive interview: Gispol's global vision



Aijaz Khan, Publisher, PAX International (left) and Ricardo Alves, General Manager, Gispol

LISBON, PORTUGAL—Family-owned [Gispol](#) is celebrating 30 years of business in 2024. *PAX International* Publisher Aijaz Khan sat down with Ricardo Alves, General Manager at Gispol, at the company's Lisbon, Portugal factory to discuss how its three decades of experience has led to new partnerships and opportunities.

The story begins in 1994. Gispol began working with the country's flag carrier [TAP Air Portugal](#) which quickly led to relationships with other industry distributors. At the time, Gispol was focused on injection moulding products, creating Business Class trays, cups, cutlery and the like.

The company then began its long-time exclusive partnership Helios Market, Product and Production Development BV. The pair worked together for about 15 years, supplying airlines including [Saudia](#), [Oman Air](#), [Air France](#), [British Airways](#) and several others. Helios was then acquired by [deSter](#) in 2012. The two continued to collaborate, but eventually it was time for Gispol to take its first steps into the wider market.

"We went into the market to look for other partners and start working directly with airlines," Alves told *PAX International*.

To gain recognition, Gispol attended the industry's major exhibitions to get more familiar with distributors and developers. In no time, the company was supplying several new customers—many of which Gispol still works with.



The Gispol team at the IFSA Global EXPO 2023

In 2018, Gispol exhibited at the World Travel Catering & Onboard Services Expo ([WTCE](#)) for the first time.

“It was quite an experience. Even though we were working with airlines for more than 20 years at that time, we were not well-known,” Alves said. “You need to be patient because it’s not an easy industry to get connected with the right people. It’s a process that takes time and that takes investment. You need to be persistent. Then everything else starts moving.”

Customers spread word of Gispol’s capabilities throughout the industry, leading to more interest, partnerships and new customers.

The company has exhibited at WTCE consistently since 2018—aside from the years affected by COVID. 2023’s WTCE was very successful for Gispol, with the company displaying its airline products and investing in its booth which had many visitors.

“We are not the new people on the block. We are already a mature company in the industry. We try to show exactly what we are capable of. Not only manufacturing but supporting our customers,” Alves said.



Gispol's Benji-design set up

Gispol will attend WTCE this May, followed by the International Flight Services Association ([IFSA](#)) Global EXPO in October. Alves said he expects both events to bring new opportunities. IFSA specifically represents an important opportunity for Gispol to create more connections with the US market.

"You must build up your relationships by going there more, again and again. We are just starting to build that up in the US, and we need to put our money and efforts there because it's a very interesting marketing for our company," Alves explained.

Meanwhile other locations, such as the Middle East and Asia, also present a significant market opportunity for Gispol. In the past, a big part of the company's production was for Middle East airlines. Some of this was lost when it stopped collaborating with deSter, and Alves said it has been difficult to get back.



Ricardo Fonesca, Inflight Account Manager (left), and Ricardo Alves, General Manager at Gispol

Gispol's moves in Asia, however, indicate a promising future. It is partnering with [Air India](#) to manufacture and supply inflight products, complementing the rollout of the airline's new global brand identity announced in December 2023. Some products will be manufactured in Lisbon, while others will be manufactured directly in India thanks to a new partnership. Alves could not share other details at the time of the interview.

"This will create the structure that we need to get into the Middle East and Asia market. Being present in that region will give us the leverage that we have been missing," Alves said. "It's very exciting for us. Our efforts are focused very much on the relationship with Air India. It is a huge opportunity to further develop our company."

He also pointed out that Gispol works with several distributors and directly with airline customers throughout Europe and the US, such as [Iberia](#), [Air Europa](#), [Corsair](#) and [Delta Air Lines](#).

In the year ahead, Alves said Gispol is also focusing on increasing its presence at industry events, as well as investing in its product design and development. The company is expanding its team and capacity, and investing in equipment for printing, scanning and other materials.

"We want people to know our company and what we can do."