

Some Asian imports are available in Mexico but apart from those from Japan, they are considered inferior to American and European equipment. The Japanese firm, Tatming, exported 60 machines to Mexico during 1994, but it expects sales to fall by half during 1995.

Mexico represents a promising market for equipment related to the manufacturing of plastic packaging and bottles, spare parts for vehicles and electric appliances, toys, and industrial plastics components. According to representatives of foreign firms and the *Asociación Nacional de las Industrias del Plástico (ANIPAC)*, National Association of the Plastics Industry, most Mexican plastics production companies use technology that is at least 20 years old. Demand for plastics production equipment will also be supported by the trend towards substituting plastics for traditional materials, such as metal, wood, ceramics and glass.

Demand for imported machinery, moulds and dies will grow at an average of 12 percent per year during the next three years.

To market plastics industry production equipment, companies should make a long-term commitment to the Mexican market before finding a representative or entering into a strategic alliance with a Mexican firm. Participating in trade exhibitions in Mexico is an important means of exposure.

ROBOTICS

The use of industrial robots is relatively new in Mexico. So far, robotics has been concentrated in the automobile industry, although universities and technical institutes are also major customers. The Ford Motor Company, for example, has introduced robotics at its Hermosillo and Cuautitlán plants. A Ford executive, quoted in the newspaper, *Reforma*, in 1994, said that their uses have included welding, painting, forging, cleaning, pressing, fusing and materials handling, as well as injection moulding of plastics, chemical treatment and storage. The primary objective has been to achieve better quality and higher precision.

The Hermosillo plant, which was designed to incorporate robotics, includes 117 robots on the production line, six in the paint shop and two in other areas. The Cuautitlán plant, which was designed without robotics, has since incorporated 11 robots and the company plans to install 19 more. Ford officials have pointed out that Mexican accounting practices, which allow for rapid depreciation of plant and equipment, encourage investment in capital equipment.