

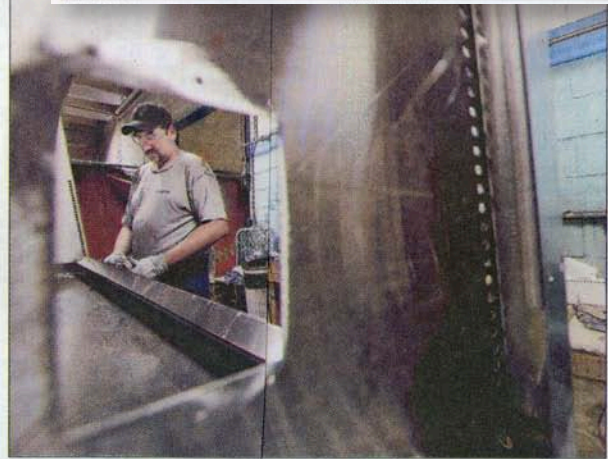
## BUSINESS FRIDAY

HIGH-TECH WINDSHIELDS MAY HELP OLDER DRIVERS SEE ROAD **CS**

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**ELECTRONICS**

### SMALL-BUSINESS PROFILE: THE BAKER CO.

# CAPITALIZING ON Foothold OVERSEAS



Exports now total 20 percent of sales for a Sanford company that makes biological equipment.

By NOEL K. GALLAGHER  
Staff Writer

A Sanford company that makes biological safety equipment has increased its export business, in part by tapping into a new and expanding life sciences market in China and by offering a tightly focused product line.

Exports now account for about 20 percent of sales for The Baker Co., said President David Eagleson. "It's something we've been working at for quite a while," he said.

The company's products are primarily used for biomedical research. Customers include public health laboratories, educational institutions and a range of industries tied to the medical profession.

"They've been really developing their international markets over the last five years or so," said Janine Bisailon-Cary, president of the Maine International Trade Center and state director of international trade. "They've developed a very creative way of not only developing new products and selling them abroad, but also having training sessions. You can see that they are investing in their staff to be more globally oriented and trade competent."

The International Trade Center recently named The Baker Co. its Exporter of the Year.

"They are one of those companies that go about their business in a quiet way," Bisailon-Cary said.

Maine exported \$2.7 billion worth of products in 2007, a 4.41 percent increase over 2006. For the nation in 2007, export growth was 12 percent.

Eagleson said the company's export business has benefited from the weak U.S. dollar, making its equipment more affordable to overseas clients because of the favorable exchange rate. In addition, there is an increased demand for the company's products post-Sept. 11, and countries in Asia have become bigger players in the medical equipment and bioscience markets.

"(China) is really modernizing," Eagleson said. "They are putting an emphasis on building up their biomed and life sci-



Photos by Derek Davis/Staff Photographer

**Above:** Kevin Martin welds a cabinet Wednesday at The Baker Co. in Sanford, which makes biological safety equipment for national and overseas customers. **Top:** Tom Holland polishes a stainless steel cabinet.

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Derek Davis/Staff Photographer

**Jack Reynold paints parts** at The Baker Co. The business has a tradition of providing specialized equipment: In 1979, it built a biological safety cabinet for a NASA shuttle flight.

## BAKER

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ences, both on the academic side and the public health side.”

Financial information about the privately held company, which employs 150 people in Sanford, is not disclosed, Eagleson said.

In addition to selling standardized, catalog-type products such as biological safety cabinets and fume hoods, The Baker Co. designs and builds a handful of large custom items every year for clients such as the federal Centers for Disease Control or the U.S. military, he said. “These are very specialized items, done to the customers’ specifications,” he said. They are not necessarily the company’s biggest money-makers, however.

“It’s kind of a marketing thing. By offering that kind of unique

product, those customers are more likely to come to us for standardized products,” Eagleson said.

The company has a tradition of offering specialized equipment: In 1979, it built a biological safety cabinet for a NASA shuttle flight.

“We have a very tight focus on one type of product line, the bio-safety cabinets,” Eagleson said. “Historically, that’s where the company started.”

The company was started by a former aerospace industry worker who developed new, clean work station technology, including the first clean-air work station in 1951.

From the aerospace industry, the company moved into micro-electronics and later into life sciences, Eagleson said. His grandfather, who bought the company in the 1950s, led the shift to life sciences, he said. Even now, he said, company officials keep an eye out for the next possible

application or market for their products.

“We’re able to think about investments in other areas as well as have enough business here in Maine in manufacturing,” he said. “I haven’t found a great one yet, but we’re keeping our eyes open.”

Bisaillon-Cary noted that The Baker Co. has already tackled what she called “second-phase” or “stretch” markets in countries such as Scandinavia and Latin America.

“We like to see Maine companies going through that thoughtful process of training their staff, doing strategic research and doing a really studied step-by-step strategy of targeting international markets,” she said. “They are really doing their preparation and then going after market position.”

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