

Competitive horizons

Lower growth expected for the economy in South Korea

South Korea's economy is predicted to grow by 3.0 per cent in 2016, the country's central bank believes. This is less than its previous estimate of 3.2 per cent. An article published by www.nzherald.co.nz reports that weakness of South Korea's currency and instability of Chinese financial markets had prompted the bank to downwardly revise its economic forecast. Reliance on domestic demand to mainly drive economic expansion is set to continue with exports remaining weak due to competition from Chinese firms. South Korean manufacturers of automobiles, ships, steel, televisions and computer chips will remain vulnerable as a consequence.

Foodservice market in the UK

The rising tendency for UK consumers to eat out is driving growth in the country's foodservice market, M&C Allegra claims. According to the industry organization's figures, the market for eating out in the UK reached £84.5 billion in 2015. This represented growth of 2.9 per cent, which was higher than the retail food grocery market in the UK. Hotels, pubs and restaurants helped to drive the majority of this demand, although significant growth was posted by less conventional outlets. Key in respect of the latter was continued expansion in the number of coffee shops and increased consumer demand for convenience food to go, www.foodnavigator.com reports. The market currently boasts around 332,000 outlets but the ongoing trend of pub closures is set to impact on this figure. It is estimated by M&C Allegra that there will be 1,000 less pubs by the end of 2016. Notwithstanding this, the remaining establishments will continue to improve the value offered to consumers and help sustain growth in the market.

Leadership and workplace change

A report published by www.industryweek.com points out that change is a constant factor in today's workplace. Employees must be able to react appropriately and adapt to changes for the company to remain competitive. The report argues that employees need to be resilient, and have the capacity to be agile and innovative. Leaders have a critical role to play in managing response to change. Where resilience is concerned, it is important for leaders to be good role models by demonstrating such qualities themselves. Displaying calmness under pressure is cited as a key example of this characteristic. Providing creative and intellectual stimulation to employees is likewise perceived as vital. Asking questions and providing challenges are ways to achieve this goal. Employee resilience can also be strengthened if leaders take time to see them as individuals with unique qualities that enhance their value to the organization. Making innovation central to an individual's job role provides an effective way of encouraging creativity. Uncertainty is an inherent feature of innovation and leadership should address the negativity that often arises as a result. Shrewd leaders recognize that autonomy helps people perform more effectively. They will therefore appreciate the merits of empowering employees to make their own decisions on how to approach tasks.

Plastic packaging firms in Germany buoyant about 2016 prospects

A study conducted by Industrievereinigung Kunststoffverpackungen (IK) has found rising optimism within the plastic packaging sector in Germany. The industry body carried out the research among its 300 member organizations and 70 per cent are positive about the economic conditions in the country. A year ago, the figure was just 37 per cent. As reported by www.prw.com, the favorable economic climate is helping to generate new opportunities for German plastic packaging firms. For example, IK has noted that all sectors are increasing their demand for protective packaging. On the negative side, high cost of electricity in Germany and instability in raw material prices were cited by around a third of companies surveyed as likely to lead to an increase in the cost of plastic packaging in the early part of 2016.