Ilene Gordon has been chairwoman, president and chief executive of Corn Products International, the corn refiner, since 2009. The business is more than a century old and started out producing mainly sweeteners and starches. It was her first job with the company.

Gordon transferred from a successful career in packaging. She had been the chief executive of Alcan Packaging, a $6.5bn global business. Alcan acquired Pechiney in 2003, a company where Gordon had served as the senior vice-president and president of plastic packaging. Prior to this, she had done a long stint in executive roles at Tenneco Packaging.

Corn Products is one of the world’s largest food ingredient companies, and also supplies the beverage, pharmaceutical, animal feed and paper industries.

Just a year after taking the helm, Gordon acquired National Starch, a manufacturer of speciality starches mostly for the food industry, for $1.35bn in cash from AkzoNobel, the Dutch paint and chemicals company. The deal offered Corn Products complementary product lines, enhanced research and development facilities and it also increased the company’s geographic footprint.
Gordon holds a mathematics degree from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and a masters in management from the MIT Sloan School of Management.