

Richard Hochfeld

A comprehensive Trac-IT Packhouse Solution is bringing significant benefits to a dedicated packhouse within Richard Hochfeld's fruit packing, grading and storage facility in Borough Green, Kent.

This project has been the largest single investment in the UK's fruit industry for some years and establishes a platform to provide the customers of both companies with improved quality and service, whilst increasing efficiency and maximising crop usage and grower returns.



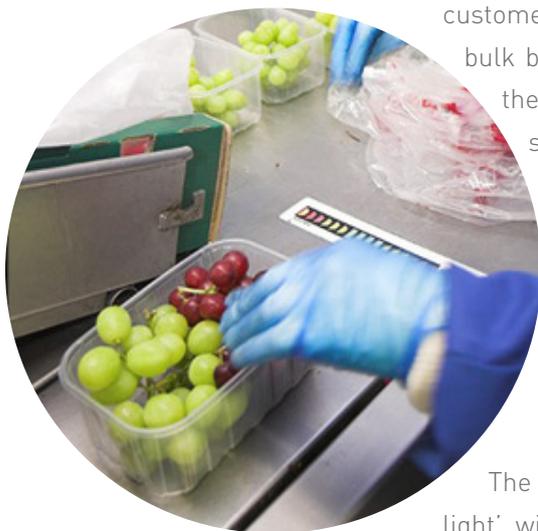
MARCO
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The complete packhouse system has been designed specifically for packing grapes, kiwi fruit and stone fruits for major supermarkets and retail outlets. The twin production line Marco Manufacturing Execution System (MES) includes 12 twin scale LineMaster portion control workstations, space-saving one, two, and four tier conveyors, auto-indexing conveyors, product diverters, product combiners, a high speed flow wrapper, netting machines, twin head labeller with print-and-apply on line facility and weigh price labeller. Fundamental to the efficient running of the packhouse is the collection and use of real time factory floor data which introduces a 'measure control improve' ethos across the factory floor.

Packhouse Solution

Packing flexibility is crucial in this fast moving sector and the system is designed so that a combination of different products can be packed on both lines to meet ever-changing customer requirements. In addition, Line One is also designed for check weighing bulk boxes of bagged grapes, whilst simultaneously feeding punnets of product to the netting equipment. Line Two has the capability of running two different fruits simultaneously.



Although there is a high level of automation within the operation, the system is still heavily dependent on the dexterity of the manual packing operators. The LineMaster's simple, yet highly effective, 16 segment coloured traffic light bar graph immediately gives a clear indication of when the pack weight comes within weight tolerance.

The operators soon 'tune in' to such visual systems and simply pack to the 'green light' without having to think about the actual weights. This system is 'language transparent' making it ideal for multi-national operators. When within weight tolerance, the punnets are placed on the requisite conveyor and transported for flow wrapping or netting. Empty trays and waste product are transported away on the lower level conveyors.

Every punnet weight is instantaneously captured by the Trac-IT LineMaster system, together with a record of the packer responsible. The LineMaster system features Marco's innovative Automatic Optimisation (AO) software, specifically developed to maximise the use of real time data capture in high speed manual packing and portion control applications.



Pack weight trends are continually monitored by the AO system, which automatically adjusts the target weight parameters at individual workstations on an ongoing basis. These continual subtle changes, which are transparent to the operators, maintain minimal giveaway with a sustained reduction in wastage whilst ensuring packs continue to comply with the Packers' Code for 'e' weighing.

The labeller system has a printer fitted for optional direct on-line printing. The labeler heads use servo-driven label drives that are synchronised with the pack and the conveyor, with the capability of linear speeds up to 40 metres per minute. This ensures accurate label positioning on the packs within $\pm 0.2\text{mm}$.

The changes brought about by the Marco System are exceptional. Before the new facility was operational, packers were regularly used to seeing giveaways of over 4%. This has now dropped dramatically by almost a factor of 100!

Richard Hochfeld's MD Alan Guindi is delighted with the installation and as he concludes: "The Marco system exceeds our expectations and provides us with the complete packing flexibility we need to satisfy our ever-changing customers' demands. Speed, accuracy and live production data are of paramount importance, together with ensuring the product reaches the consumer in tip top condition. The multi-tier conveyor configuration makes optimum use of space, whilst providing a highly efficient transportation system. Our pack giveaway has fallen to almost zero and full traceability is an integral part of Trac-IT MES."

To learn more about Richard Hochfeld [click here](#)



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