

MAKING SENSE OF 'e' WEIGHING



Are you exporting or planning to export your fresh produce to Europe?

Would you like to find out more about European average weight legislation and how it could improve your profits by up to 10%?

European Consumers have come to expect that they can purchase an ever expanding range of fresh produce all year round.

The diversity of such products, including strawberries, blueberries, asparagus, fresh herbs, runner beans and broccoli, means that supply now comes from all around the world: from South Africa to Morocco; from Chile to New Zealand.

However, packing regulations for pre-packaged fresh produce can be somewhat confusing, especially for suppliers outside the European area who want to export to this large market. It is essential that growers and packers understand what is required to conform with

legislation so that products are not rejected and the consumer is protected. To avoid confusion, pack house profitability experts MARCO are offering help and guidance for pack houses, explaining what they need to do to comply with packing legislation, whilst at the same time, helping to improve their productivity and profitability.

SHOULD I PACK USING THE MINIMUM OR AVERAGE WEIGHT SYSTEM?

There are significant commercial and operational advantages in packing to the Average Weight System ('e' weighing) and this has now more or less replaced the minimum weight system in many countries.

HOW DO THESE SYSTEMS DIFFER?

Minimum weight system. Packs that are sold using the minimum weight method must all contain at least the weight stated by the seller. The draw back of this system is that there is no room for error and the supplier can be penalized for any underweight packs that are shipped to the European market. As a result, the packer's mean weight has to be several percent above the target weight in order to comply. This may keep them within the law but such unnecessary 'giveaway' has a number of profit-sapping drawbacks. Not only does it require additional product to fulfil weight requirements, but it also

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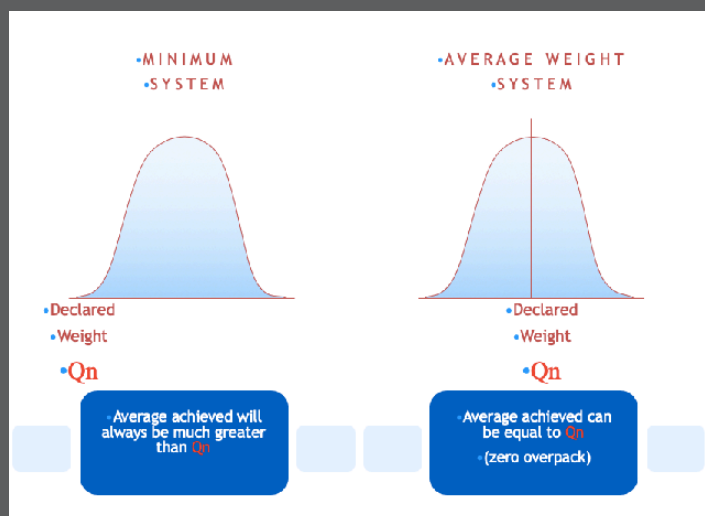
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increases airfreight costs, which can be a significant part of a packer's overheads.



AVERAGE WEIGHT SYSTEM ('e' WEIGHING)

On average, the finished packs using this system contain no less than the quantity indicated on the label. Unlike the minimum weight system, the average weight system allows a small, clearly defined number of packs to contain less product than the label specified weight, (within a clearly specified tolerance).

The number of packs allowed below the stated weight is calculated statistically in proportion to the total number of packs in a particular line run. The average weight system is considered to be a more fair and practical system for both the packer and the consumer. Pre packages fulfilled in accordance with the average weight system can carry the 'e' mark.

DO I NEED TO PUT THE 'e' MARK ON MY PACKAGES AND WHAT DOES IT SIGNIFY?

Surprisingly the 'e' mark is not mandatory and actually it has no real legal standing. It acts more like a stamp of approval or passport - in essence the 'e' mark on a prepackaged container signifies that the prepackage complies with 76/211/EEC or 75/106/EEC prepackaged goods EU directives. By displaying the e-mark, the manufacturer (or importer) 'guarantees' that the prepackage originates from a batch with a content that meets the requirements of the Council Directives' average principle, which has been agreed within the EEC

area. In most European countries, the presence of the 'e' mark almost certainly makes your products more acceptable to the major retail outlets and supermarkets.

HOW CAN MARCO HELP?

MARCO have extensive experience in helping clients understand and meet European packing legislation, whilst also improving your profitability. Contact us to find out more about 'e' weighing, average weight legislation and the three packers' rules.

Nominal pack weight - g	Tolerable negative error	
	% of nominal package weight	weight - g
5-50	9	-
50-100	-	4.5
100-200	4.5	-
200-300	-	9
300-500	3	-
500-1,000	-	15
1,000-10,000	1.5	-

The table and all associated weight calculations are held within MARCO Yield Control Module Software and the unique function of Automatic Optimisation ensures the three packers rules associated to average weight are met.

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