Top 5 tips for improving ready meal productivity

MARCO

1 DESKILL THE MANUAL ASSEMBLY PROCESS

Provide a meal assembly workstation interface (coloured light array) that operators can use intuitively without having to make decisions based on target weight values in terms of grams or ounces. Using a 'take away' weighing method simplifies and speeds up the assembly process, whilst maintaining technical compliance. (Large trays of individual components are placed on scales in front of the operators.

The operators remove the correct amount of product for a particular meal guided by the lights on the screen).
For similarly sized meal components, a visual target weight system based on the individual meal components greatly increases line speeds. The operators are guided to remove a displayed number of component portions from the weighed trays. This technology works well for regular sized meat portions, sliced products and whole products such as tomatoes and mushrooms.

2 ENSURE YOUR READY MEAL ASSEMBLY SYSTEM GROWS AS YOU GROW

Although the challenges facing food manufacturers have underlying common factors, experience shows that each food assembly process is slightly different, with a separate set of requirements. The key to success is being able to provide a solution that can measure individual operator performances and then act on these metrics. Significant improvements in productivity can only be achieved if the current information from the assembly lines is continually used as the basis for ongoing improvements.

3 USE 'BEST PERFORMERS' TO TRAIN 'UNDER-PERFORMERS'

By measuring the performance of individual line operators, you can identify the best performers and use them to transfer their techniques to the under-performing operators through a structured training process.

4 CONTROL WASTE BY MEASURING THE 'MASS BALANCE' OF THE READY MEAL PROCESS

By measuring the weight of meal ingredients entering the production area in a given time and comparing it with the weight of finished packed meals in the same period, levels of waste and over-fill can be calculated, together with information on where and when these events have occurred in the process. Ongoing process improvements can then be made based on this collective information.

5 IMPLEMENT AN EFFICIENT RECIPE FORMULATION SYSTEM

Many ready meals include sauces and fillings which play an important part in the overall quality and consistency of the meal. It is essential that manufacturers deliver a consistent product to ensure that there are no wasted batches and that their customers receive consistency of colour and more importantly taste.

If these sauces and fillings are manually produced, it is important to implement an effective recipe formulation system which polices the procedures, guides and controls operators as the ingredients are added. MARCO Recipe Formulation Module de-skills the whole formulation process whilst delivering product consistency and full ingredient traceability.