

MARCO install Trac-IT packhouse solution for Richard Hochfeld

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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. We continue to enjoy a great working relationship. ”

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Productivity Improvement Experts

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A comprehensive MARCO Trac-IT® packhouse solution is bringing significant benefits to the dedicated packing area within Richard Hochfeld's grading and packing 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 factory efficiency and maximising crop usage and grower returns.

The complete packhouse system has been designed specifically for packing table grapes, kiwi fruit and stone fruits for major supermarkets and retail outlets.

The MARCO Trac-IT® Manufacturing Execution System (MES) includes 12 twin-scale LineMaster portion control workstations, one, two, and four tier conveyors, auto-indexing conveyors, product diverters, product combiners, a high speed flow wrapper, netting machines, twin head labeller, and weigh price labeller. Fundamental to the efficient running of the pack house is the collection and use of real time factory floor data which allows Richard Hochfeld to monitor and improve their packing lines.

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. 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 also 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.

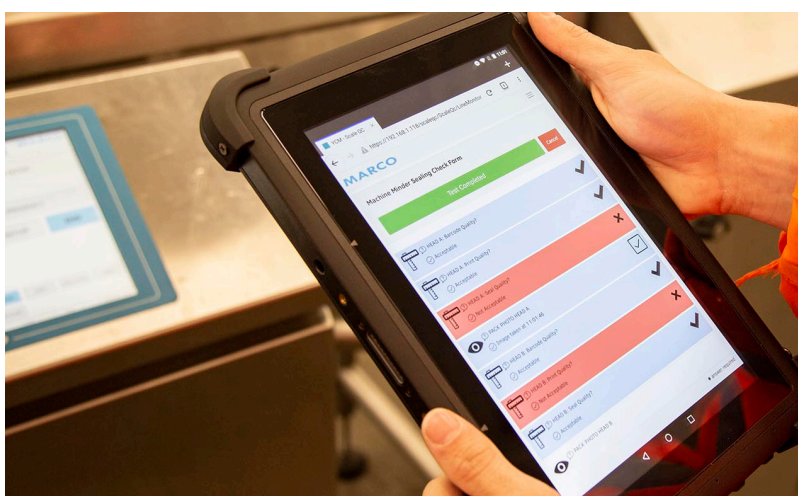
The LineMaster's simple, yet highly effective, traffic light weighing indicator immediately gives a clear indication of when the pack weight comes within weight tolerance. The operators soon 'tune in' to such visual systems and simply pack to the 'green light' without having to think about the actual 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 each LineMaster scale, together with a record of the packer responsible. This allows Richard Hochfeld to constantly monitor their operators performance and address any issues rapidly.

Pack weight trends are continually monitored by the system, which automatically adjusts the target weights at individual scales on an ongoing basis. These continual subtle changes, which are not noticed by the operators, maintain minimal overpack with a sustained reduction in wastage whilst ensuring packs continue to comply with 'Average Weight' legislation. This ensures Richard Hochfeld's produce is fully compliant with all UK supermarket regulations associated with pack weight.



The labeller system has a printer fitted for direct on-line printing. The labeller heads 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 Trac-IT[®] Manufacturing Execution System (MES) 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.

MARCO have also installed a grape packing solution within Richard Hochfeld's facility in South Africa. Watch the full video to see how Richard Hochfeld's table grapes make their way from their South African farms, through the packhouses, and onto UK supermarket shelves.