



EXCELLENCE IN READY MEALS

Achieving Superior Quality in Ready Meal/Convenience Food Production

The UK ready meal market is a large and well-established industry.

In 2023, the UK ready meal market was estimated to be worth around £3.5 billion. It has seen steady growth in recent years, driven by factors like busy lifestyles, smaller household sizes, and convenience-oriented consumer preferences.

Key trends shaping the market include a focus on health and nutrition, sustainability, and choice. There is growing demand for meals with clean labels, plant-based options, and international cuisines.

To remain competitive and profitable in such situations manufacturers must have real time control and visibility of their assembly process, especially in terms of optimising productivity, efficiency, labour over-heads and quality, whilst minimising waste and giveaway/overpack.



Our operators have found the new system extremely easy to use and we are now seeing significant benefits in terms of reduced giveaway."
GRENCORE

Ready to Eat

The diversity in the shape and size of ready meal/convenience food ingredients mean that the assembly process relies predominantly on manual operations involving a high number of relatively unskilled operators.

The challenge is to strike a balance between maintaining the consistency of the finished product, hitting target weights within legal requirements and minimising giveaway; whilst preserving meal presentation and optimising throughput productivity.

Not an easy challenge, especially with short order runs and constantly changing customer schedules.

MARCO have extensive experience in the design and implementation of factory productivity systems which have a proven track record in increasing productivity by 30% or more. These have been developed to de-skill the manual packing process, providing an easy-to-use operator interface, together with the levels of data capture required for comprehensive factory visibility and control.

MARCO believe that the three key areas within ready meal manufacture that need to be addressed to improve productivity are:

- Giveaway,
- Waste Management
- Recipe Formulation

Reducing Giveaway/Overpack

Many ready meal/convenience food operations have traditionally used standalone digital bench scales to determine and control pack weights/contents. These standard products are relatively slow and the process laborious; with no system for recording weights so that trends can be measured and monitored.

Fortunately there are now productivity systems that have been specifically developed to provide an easy to use operator interface, together with the levels of data capture required for comprehensive visibility, control and traceability.



Companies that have invested in such systems are now well ahead of their competitors. Any yield control system must be easy to use by operators and be designed to de-skill the factory floor operations.

"The MARCO Trac-IT Software has given us an environment where we now have total control, total reportability, less mistakes and one where every action is logged".
UNILEVER



Waste

The ability to measure the actual usage of ingredients – from initial issue to the lines through to finished meals - provides critical information on the overall effectiveness of the manufacturing operation and can be used to check the efficiency of individual packers/operatives.

By using platform scales and bar code scanners located at key areas of the factory, combined with data from individual work stations, overall waste production can be measured.

Recipe Formulation

Accurate and repeatable recipe formulation is vital for delivering top-quality ready meals and convenience foods, especially when producing sauces, dressings, and gravies. An integrated recipe management system can streamline the entire process, from Bill of Materials (BOM) generation to the final product.

With operator-friendly workstation scales and clear graphics, your team can be easily guided through precise formulation steps. Barcode scanners ensure ingredient accuracy and uphold FIFO standards, while simple touch screen prompts keep the process efficient and error-free.

Elevate your production quality with a system that simplifies every stage of recipe management.



With extensive expertise in designing and building innovative ready meal production systems, MARCO delivers solutions proven to **enhance pack house and factory productivity by up to 30%**. Unlike adapted standard equipment, MARCO systems are engineered from the ground up, with custom hardware and software tailored specifically to the needs of ready meal/convenience food production.

Above all, MARCO solutions are designed with simplicity in mind, ensuring that operators find them intuitive and easy to use. By combining advanced engineering with user-friendly functionality, our solutions empower your production line for seamless, efficient, and consistent high-performance.

MARCO Limited

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