

Produce-ing Solutions

TWO RESOLUTIONS TO SEPARATE PACKAGING PROBLEMS INVOLVING FRESH PRODUCE COULD BE APPLIED TO A MULTITUDE OF PRODUCTS.

BY SEAN RILEY

Ever wish you could get another opinion when it comes to solving a packaging problem? Here two packaging users share their solutions to difficult scenarios.

Challenge: *We want to evolve our business from bulk bags of produce into single serve portions of fresh-cut sliced fruit for schools, without sacrificing the accuracy and care of manual bagging.*

Solutions: **Employ automatic scales and vertical form/fill/seal equipment.**

"About three years ago, apple slice packets were gaining in popularity with children as a convenient way to enjoy a healthy snack, whether at school, at restaurants or in supermarkets.

As proprietor of Champlain Valley Specialty of New York Inc. this seemed like an ideal time for us to move from packaging standard New York State produce, to new fresh-cut snack food size portions.

We began with five-pound bags for the food service industry, but were immediately on the lookout for a system that would let us bag smaller single serve portions.

Fortunately for us, another local company, which happened to be in our industry, had successfully attempted the same transition.

I approached them with questions about their bagging line and they ▶



[above] An incline infeed conveyor carries the sliced fruit (in this case apples) to a CombiScale14 Head Combination scale.



[right] The scale is able to accurately weigh 58-gram bags within one gram.

Photos courtesy of WeighPack



(left-to-right) Champlain Valley Specialty President Jerry Dygert and WeighPack Systems Territory Sales Manager Trevor Dawe showcase the finished product after it is bagged on a Vertek form/fill/seal bagger.

pointed me in the direction of WeighPack Systems Inc.

WeighPack provided an automatic solution to weigh and fill sliced apples and carrots ranging from 58-gram single-serve consumer packs to two-pound food service packages. The equipment combined a four lane V-Mini scale with a Vertek 1150 vertical form/fill/seal bagger and incline infeed conveyor.

WeighPack offered us peace of mind based on the fact that they are a single source provider. They assumed full responsibility for the system with their technical expertise on both the bagger and the scale, rather than sourcing out pieces of the system to other manufacturers. The one-stop shopping was a big selling point for us.

Less than three months after the installation of that first line in December 2004, the success of the sliced fruit led us back to WeighPack for a second, similar installation in March 2005. This time the system included a faster 750 vertical form/fill bagger with an identical scale and conveyor.

We were significantly pleased with the second installation and purchased a third complete system before the end of June. This third system included a 14-head CombiScale with Xpdius vertical form/fill/seal bagger. The CombiScale was able to accurately weigh our 58-gram packages of apples within one gram.

Working with WeighPack, we were able to enter the sliced food market and improve our output from 45 bags a minute

to 85-90 bags a minute in less than six months. Our lines are running 24 hours a day, five days a week and producing on average about 1000 boxes of 100 bags a day.

We plan to purchase a fourth system soon, as we recently completed a contract with a large school district in which we will be providing 100 percent of their sliced produce needs. Right now that consists of apples and carrots, but we intend to expand into grapes and possibly even melons and oranges. The only hang up with the citrus fruits is that we really strive to use New York State products."

Jerry Dygert

Proprietor

Champlain Valley Specialty of New York, Inc.

For additional information on WeighPack's automated weighing and packaging solutions, scales, baggers, vertical form-fill & seal machines, wrappers, check-weighers & conveyors, visit their website at: www.weighpack.com or call them at 1-888-934-4472.



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