



# Case Study

## LOMA PROVIDES SMOOTH SOLUTION FOR IRISH YOGURTS

**When market-leading yogurt producer Irish Yogurts needed to guarantee that their premium product remained 100% contaminant-free, they turned to global quality inspection specialist Loma Systems for help. AXIS, Loma's latest x-ray inspection system, proved to be the solution.**

Clonakilty-based Irish Yogurts was established six years ago by its farsighted director Diarmuid O'Sullivan who, after several years in the dairy and farming industry, spotted a gap in the Irish market for a luxury yogurt brand. Since then, the company has rapidly carved out a niche as Ireland's top supplier of traditional churnmade yogurt, producing half a million tubs of the stuff every week - enough to fill 13 swimming pools! This statistic is even more astonishing given that the company does not have a single salesperson on the payroll. Diarmuid O'Sullivan explains, "We're not known for producing the cheapest yogurt on the market, we're known for producing the best, and as our products' reputation has spread, we find that customers come to us with their orders."



The company's turnover is growing at over 70 per cent year on year and now employs more than 50 people, from just two at the start. As well as supplying Aer Lingus and the Irish domestic market, Irish Yogurts numbers prestigious UK department stores - such as Selfridges and Harrods - and the supermarket chain Tesco among its customers.

A large part of the yogurt's appeal is its unique texture. This is achieved by the company's innovative 'made in the churn' production process which gives characteristics such as a smooth, creamy body and texture, with enhanced flavour. No artificial colourings or flavourings are used, with the main ingredients being farm fresh milk from Diarmuid's family farm, chunks of fresh fruit and live yogurt cultures.

To keep one step ahead of the market, the company has built up an extensive product range including diet yogurts, custard-style yogurts, Greek yogurts, low fat natural yogurt and thick and creamy yogurts, all available in a wide variety of tempting flavours.

They are packaged in an upmarket, eye-catching paper tub with a printed aluminium foil lid. It is this lid which prevents Irish Yoghurts using a traditional metal detector from Loma's extensive range, as their high sensitivity would result in the wafer-thin sheet of foil being picked up on each pot but, as an intrinsic part of the brand image, the foil lid had to stay. The

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company was understandably reluctant to change the line around, with the costs and upheaval that would entail, so Diarmuid O'Sullivan turned to Loma for help.

With hygiene and safety being of overriding importance in a food processing environment, Loma's state-of-the-art AXIS x-ray machine was the answer. Features such as Dynamic Analysis Software, which automatically adapts to product variability and makes detection of the smallest unwanted objects easy - was just one of the features that influenced Irish Yogurts' decision. Of particular interest to the company, given the need for manufacturing to keep up with demand, was the fact that the AXIS has the highest speed inspection capability on the market. But, most important of all, the AXIS is not affected by foil or metalised film packaging so, to Diarmuid's relief, the product's distinctive tin lids could stay.



Alan Johnson, general manager of Loma's x-ray division, asserts that, "However many precautions food manufacturers and processors take, however strictly they comply with food safety legislation, it is impossible to state with absolute certainty that there is no possibility of foreign bodies contaminating product during some stage of the production process. For this reason, a foolproof quality inspection system is vital, not just to comply with HACCP procedures, but to protect the integrity of the brand."

This last point has particular resonance for Diarmuid who says, "With our product positioned at the premium end of the market, we have to be absolutely sure that each pot of yogurt is nothing short of perfect - every time. We felt the only way to get that degree of reassurance was to choose an x-ray inspection system from Loma."

Quality manager Mona Pomeroy has day-to-day responsibility for protecting the product's reputation by ensuring it remains contaminant-free. She says, "Metal, ceramic, glass, cardboard, stick, stem, stones - the list of foreign bodies that could potentially contaminate yogurt during the production process is almost endless. We have to be so vigilant, especially because so much of our product - fudge flavour in particular - is consumed by children."

The Loma AXIS was installed in January of this year and Mona delightedly reports that, thanks to its high sensitivity, nothing has yet got past the machine.

While Diarmuid considered other manufacturers, he decided to work with Loma because, "Their machines are reliable, efficient and the company deliver a good back-up service afterwards."

Over the next five years, Irish Yogurts plans to develop a bigger presence in the UK and expand into Continental Europe. With the production line currently operating 21 hours a day, five days a week, Diarmuid is working on plans to build a new 30,000 square foot factory, equipped with the latest technology, to cope with demand. This is all good news for Loma, as Diarmuid says, "I hope we'll be needing several more x-ray machines before too long!"

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