



Case Study

LOMA'S PACKAGE 'MEATS' WITH APPROVAL AT ST MERRYN

Key to St Merryn Meats's new automated processing lines are three integrated checkweigher and metal detector systems and a data management package supplied by Loma Systems. The state-of-the-art equipment has helped significantly cut breakdowns at the wholesalers and increase line speeds by 60%.

The best in the business are always aiming to improve themselves. Be it in the form of new product ranges, better staff or refined production process, they share the common goal of raising the standards even higher. For St Merryn Meats that meant installing three new mince processing lines that would boost its turnaround to 700 tonnes a week. For the company's technical manager at its processing and packaging plant in Victoria, Cornwall, the upgrade was about speed and reliability.

"The whole point of the project was to improve line speeds and cut downtime," says Richard Clatworthy, technical manager and group scales at St Merryn Meats. "With the new lines we can process a lot more product in a lot less time."

The wholesale meat processor supplies a number of high-street supermarkets with quality packaged meat products, ranging from standardised mince products to Tesco's Finest range. Key to its success is the company's commitment to continued improvement, most recently exemplified by the new automated packaging lines.



Key to this latest self-improvement project were three fully integrated checkweigher and metal detector systems supplied by the end-of-line inspection specialist, Loma Systems. Richard explains that the AS Combo systems were commissioned as part of the new automated packaging lines in January 2002. He says the end-of-line inspection equipment provides a "due diligence check" on the 500g and 800g thermoform packs of mince and facilitates a run rate that is 60% quicker than the previous supplier's old system.

"Since Loma's all-in-one systems check 90 packs a minute, we have recorded a huge improvement in line speed compared to the old checkweighers, which could only manage 55 packs a minute," Richard notes.

The compact AS units have an impressive range of operating performance, and are capable of running up to speeds of up to 400ppm. As well as being quick, the new machines are also incredibly reliable and have significantly slashed the number of breakdowns at the Cornish plant.

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Less downtime and quicker line speeds have had a huge impact on the business. “The whole system has given us a real push forward in terms of processability and quality of product,” says Richard. “An important part of this has been the reliability we get from Loma’s equipment.”

Loma’s AS Combo system combines a Loma IQ² metal detector and the Loma AS series checkweigher, which provide accurate weight measurements and sensitive metal detection. Built from robust stainless steel, the compact units incorporate high-powered, variable AC motors tailored for both speed and accuracy.



At St Merryn Meats, the tough units are linked via Loma’s data management software package, Loma OnLine, which Richard says provides the company with vital processing information. “Because we produce an average-weight product, we have to ensure that each pack contains a minimum weight. We factor in an excess tolerance of 15 grams; anything above that will be rejected. Loma’s OnLine system provides us with detailed batch information relating to both underweight and overweight rejections. It also gives us accurate information about how much weight we’re giving away, so we can improve the portioning process.”

The windows-based system amalgamates weight and overfill data, presenting it in a format that is easy to understand. It can also be used as a real-time management tool, giving an instant overview of performance or historical data that can be used to identify weaknesses and initiate improvements. In this way, Loma OnLine reflects St Merryn Meats's ongoing search for excellence.

“Our name is based on quality, and on the quality products we produce,” Richard concludes. “We like to be at the forefront of the latest technology that will help us continue to do that – that’s why we opted for Loma.”
